SPORTING REMINISCENCES

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Drawn by Archibald Thorburn

The Morsgail Stag.

SPORTING REMINISCENCES

BY

LORD GRANVILLE GORDON

EDITED BY

F. G. AFLALO

WITH TWENTY-THREE ILLUSTRATIONS IN HALF-TONE, AND FOUR IN PHOTO-GRAVURE FROM DRAWINGS BY HARINGTON BIRD, J. G. MILLAIS, AND ARCHIBALD THORBURN

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PREFACE

Lord Granville Gordon is anxious that this book should be prefaced with a statement of how it came to be offered to the reading public, and in particular of how he was asked to write it in spite of his assurance that nothing that he could say would possibly have any interest for anybody but himself. In this assumption he may or may not have been right, but the editor readily pleads guilty to the responsibility, believing as he does that the author's experiences on more or less trodden ground, and also his outspoken opinions on prominent sports and sportsmen, often fresh and always free from malice, may amuse. The book is not intended to instruct.

It is quite unnecessary to make any pretence of introducing the Author to a sporting public that already knows him well, for, without pressing the comparison further, one might put in his mouth (though he would be the last to utter such a sentiment) the words of Milton's Lucifer. In case, however, there may be those whom some few words of

the author's personality, in addition to his portrait on an early page, will help to a better understanding of the book, it may be said that he was a younger son—that explains so much in some cases—and a pioneer. He followed his own line of country without waiting to see what Society would think. He does so still, and it would never surprise his friends to encounter him on a cold morning in Pall Mall dressed in the costume that might rather be regarded as peculiarly adapted to the laborious stalking of the higher fjelds. He was one of the first gentlemen who openly laid against horses, and in this book he tells how he came to do so. Also he was one of the first gentlemen to ride a bicycle in the streets of London, an exploit that made his brother, the late Lord Esmé, vow that it was enough to make generations of dead Gordons turn in their graves. Quite twenty years ago, as a third instance of the strength of his convictions, he was laughed at by fellow-members of the Turf Club for openly expressing the opinion that golf was a grand game. Many of the scoffers may have gone, but golf is here still, and shows some signs of staying.

He is a sportsman and a poet, two enthusiasms quite capable of going together. These pages show something of his sentiments, though he is anything but a communicative subject, and the bare editorial admission of having asked him to write the book conveys little idea of the unceasing persuasion of an extreme reticence. He has shot and fished and hunted all over the British Isles, and his experiences of grouse

driving at Lowther, on the occasion of the recent visit of the Crown Prince of Germany, have a personal interest. His foreign sporting expeditions include his trip to Wyoming with the late Horace Flower, his excursion after reindeer and ryper in the Hardanger district of Norway, and the unsuccessful ventures in Albania and Sardinia, to which he has been persuaded to devote a chapter. He has also met some of the leading cricketers and golfers and billiard players of the day, and on these and other games and sports he has something to say.

It is not for a moment pretended that the book breaks new ground for the sportsman. So many works issue from the press nowadays detailing the magnificent sport to be enjoyed in some remote range of mountains in the heart of Asia, and quite inaccessible save to the millionaire or to the Indian official on short leave, that there may be room for yet another amid more homely and more attainable scenes. These pages deal far more with the beaten than with the unbeaten track, and it was rather the writer's unusual opinions than the scenes of his journeyings that suggested the possibilities of his book.

In selecting the photographs, those taken by the author have been, where necessary, supplemented by others, in many cases lent by friends, and equally characteristic of the scenes and subjects to which reference is made in the text. Some of these are by the well-known artist, Mr. C. Reid, of Wishaw.

It remains only to add that the proofs had not the advantage of revision by the Author, who was at the Antipodes when the book was going through the press.

F. G. A.

TEIGNMOUTH, 1902.

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

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LORD GRANVILLE GORDON.

Photo by C. Vandyk.

I

LOST IN THE ROCKIES; AND BAGGING A BIG WAPITI

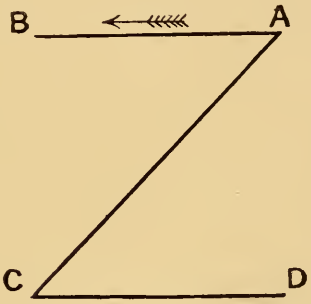
THE horrible feeling of helplessness which overwhelms any one lost in even an English wood or Scotch deer forest is really unreasonable, since a little calm reflection and the climbing of a sapling will almost always disclose the lay of the land. I have been lost more than once in this second-class way, in Northamptonshire woods and in the fir forests of Aberdeenshire, but such commonplace sporting experiences scarcely live in the memory. One day in the eighties, however, I was properly lost in the Rocky Mountains, and I am never likely to forget the sensation of the real thing.

Old H. F. and I were out after wapiti, a band of which, with at any rate one good bull, I spied through my glasses on some hilly ground a mile or so away on our left. We had shifted camp earlier in the afternoon, and as all our available men were wanted to put up the tents and unload the animals a mile or two further on, there was

nothing for it but to go after the wapiti alone. H. flatly refused to accompany me, as he was in imagination already catching large trout in the river that we knew ran past the green embankment of our night's camp. With the customary long look at such useful landmarks as the most conspicuous heights on all sides, I wheeled my horse round almost at right angles to the course we were then taking and rode for perhaps three-quarters of an hour to the edge of the broken ground on which I had spied the wapiti feeding. I had, however, kept well down on the right, so as to go up wind on them, and at what seemed the most appropriate spot I tethered my horse and proceeded on foot, for, in the first place, much of the ground became too trying for the animal, and, secondly, I never knew at what precise moment I might stumble on the game. The letter Z roughly indicates the position, as I now know it, and I advanced cautiously, keeping a sharp look-out for the wapiti. I had not gone a hundred yards when I saw a young bull about as far again ahead, but there was, I knew, a better beast in the herd that I had seen, so I left this one alone rubbing his neck against a tree and oblivious of my presence. The stalker who goes for numbers, irrespective of size, is a butcher, not a sportsman, and there is than he no greater enemy to sport. There was in this case nothing for it but to make a considerable detour and approach on a side wind. This I accordingly did,

TRAPPER'S HUT.

and was soon poking my nose over a mound in the full expectation of seeing my wapiti in the next hollow. I was disappointed in this, however, so crept carefully forward to the next crest and again peeped over, with as little result. It seemed evident that I must still be short of the mark and had not gone far enough round, so I retraced my steps and made what I intended as another



A. Spot where I left the caravan.
B. The caravan's destination.
A. to C. My course when after the wapiti.
C. Spot where I tethered the horse.
D. Spot where I had seen the wapiti.

crescent detour. What course it actually took, Goodness only knows. Several more ridges were peered over, and revealed nothing. The wapiti had unaccountably disappeared.

I have described the ground as hilly, but that is indeed a feeble and inadequate term for it. I found myself, in fact, swallowed up in an apparently infinite series of ridges and hollows,

sprinkled with rocky boulders and littered with fallen tree trunks that Noah might have discarded as too old for purposes of boat-building. These obstacles did not render progress particularly comfortable, while the young generation of fir-trees, which had not long started life on their own account, were just precocious enough to shut out the view of the distant mountains by which I had roughly taken my bearings. Excitement had so far kept me on the move, for I was every minute fully expecting to come up with the game, and it was not indeed until hollow after hollow had been drawn blank that a horrible feeling of despair began to possess me. No longer did I creep and crawl with the stalker's caution; I ran wildly from ridge to ridge and shouted at the top of my voice. I would have given my favourite rifle even to have seen those wapiti, for a knowledge of their whereabouts must have told me my own.

The horse! Surely I could have little difficulty in finding him; and his instinct would succeed where my memory failed. I had come . . . but it was useless trying to think where or how I had come. A little more of ineffectual endeavour to retrace my steps the way I had come, and I sat down on a trunk dead-beat. It was getting on for evening by now; the sun was going down, and its rays shot through the skeleton fir trunks. Darkness would gather in a little after six, and Tom Collins, the cook, would be saying, "Guess

the boss is late!" I saw it all in my mind's eye, and how, a little later, H., who would long ago have given me up in his unuttered thoughts for lost, would suggest that Jack should light a beacon fire on the rock over the camp to guide me in. About seven, perhaps, Jack would make a feeble pretence of going to pile logs on the beacon fire, and the loud crack of a Winchester would startle the men and animals and everything civilised and uncivilised for miles around. Echo alone would answer, and ten minutes later a second report would ring out, this time startling only the horses and leaving the ensuing silence more intense by contrast. There might, as they well knew, be an answering shot; equally, there might not. If there were none, then Jack would stroll quietly back to the silent pipe-smoking group round the camp fire and would say, phlegmatically enough—

"Reckon we'd better turn in now and get away by the first streak of dawn. He won't stand two nights like this, even if he has matches. Tom will get some coffee ready while Jim and I round the pintos up."

All this I plainly heard and saw, and indeed Jack's remarks brought home to me with a shock the painful truth that I had no matches with me. I was steaming hot at the moment, but I knew quite well that when the sun went down the cold would be intense. I had not even a jacket; it was on the horse, and my matchbox was in the

ticket pocket. There is a psychological moment in all such desperate straits when a man takes his fate in his hands and shakes it, if I may so put it, by the throat. This "do or die" feeling had now come to me. It was not under particularly romantic or splendid conditions, but it was none the less potent on that account. I shook myself together and climbed one of the fir-trees. In ordinary circumstances fir-trees are not the most comfortable vegetables to climb, but I made so little account of this one that I was on the swaying top before I realised how. There was a terrible monotony in the surrounding landscape; all around snow-covered mountains glittered in the sun. Away to my right lay an abrupt hill of only moderate altitude, coming short of the snow-line and with a timber forest on its summit. This looked to be the nearest high ground, and I came to the obvious determination to climb it and look out from the top. Once or twice while breasting that steep ascent I looked around, but there was nothing to distinguish one vista from the next, and the repeated disappointment so unnerved me that I vowed to look back no more until the top was reached. At last there was no more excuse, and it was with something like terror that I took stock of the scene below. Away in the distance rose the snow ranges of the Big Horns. And I felt that the world was wide. Listlessly I gazed to the left. Stay! What was that moving object on the hillside opposite, going

in a direction at right angles to that in which I had recently tramped? I got the telescope on this

SNOWED UP!

interesting mark. The telescope and my boots (well, sometimes a part of the latter) are the only

things I never yet left behind on the hill. The telescope revealed wapiti at the first glance. The second showed a big and small bull and seven cows. I never before or since felt so well disposed towards wapiti, so determined not to shoot, whatever temptation might offer, as now, for these were certainly the same herd that I had seen before, and there too was the little buck that I had last seen—was it a week or a month ago?—rubbing his neck against the bark of a tree. The animals were feeding on so slowly and deliberately that it required only a rough calculation to arrive at the extent of ground they had probably covered and to reach the point from which they had worked. I had then to arrive at the edge of the right timber-line and work back to the spot where my horse stood tethered. I was not long in striking a line for the head of the valley, a point to the rear of where the wapiti now showed themselves. The way was downhill now, and the distance seemed nothing. From an elevated knoll at the head of the valley I saw all that I dared hope to see. In front lay the knolly ground I had wandered in, and a bird's-eye view of it caused me to appreciate the difficulty with which the children of Israel found their way out of the wilderness, though they know how to find their way round Hyde Park now. Right before me ran a purling stream, which, after a course of about a quarter of a mile, emerged through the thin firs into open ground. It seemed to me that

I could not do better than keep the course of this stream.

With a deep feeling of gratitude, I at length left the edge of the wood and distinctly traced the route our caravan had taken that morning on the opposite hill. My satisfaction was still greater when I presently found my tethered horse and rode, a little later, into camp. We are accustomed

A STREAM IN THE ROCKIES.

to return thanks for the *sang-froid* of the Anglo-Saxon. I suppose, indeed, that it is something to be proud of. H. barely looked up from the novel which he lay reading just outside his tent. Tom Collins was stewing just such a savoury mess as Esau sold his soul for. Jack looked up from some skins that he was busy dressing and asked briefly—

"Get him, boss?"

And I replied, equally briefly, that the brutes had led me on and lost me in the timber. The conversation then turned on other matters, and soon languished. Pipes were glowing in the darkness, and my narrow escape ended in an anti-climax. But it might have been otherwise ordered.

I was lost in the mountains a second time, but the conditions did not sufficiently differ from those of my first adventure to make the second worth the telling. This habit of going astray arose from my practice of going out alone, and that in its turn was due to the defection of Ira Germaine, my hunter, never better than a surly and uncivil brute, and with but one accomplishment in life—that of spitting raised to the level of a fine art—that I was slow to appreciate. About his expectoration there were no preliminaries; none of the orthodox clearing of the throat or pursing of the lips. Once a second a small particle of moisture would leave his mouth and strike the chosen target with unfailing accuracy. As a "turn" at a modern music hall, where the popular enthusiasm runs high in eccentric channels, Germaine's spitting might have won laurels; on me it was thrown away. It was after getting lost for the second time that I found myself tired of going alone, and in future I always insisted on the cook, Tom Collins, accompanying me. Collins was in most respects an excellent fellow, but no good whatever after game. He flatly refused to crawl on his stomach after "derned deer"; if they could not wait till he got up to them, they

might "go to h—— on their own." Yet even such unsporting company was infinitely preferable to the risk of again facing those awful solitudes without knowing the way. There is very little mercy in Nature where her interference would smooth the difficulties in our path. The sun shines, the moon gleams, the stars scintillate as brightly for all they look on a man dying of thirst in the bush; thousands have moaned in vain for a cup of water or a shower of rain, and only poets and dreamers, whose pleasure or profit have never tempted them to stare Nature in the face out of reach of civilisation, can blind themselves to her cruelty.

About this time we had determined somewhat suddenly to return home. The resolve mattered little to me, for I had bagged heads of every beast that has its home in the Rockies. H., however, was sick and disheartened. His want of success may be put down in some measure to his habit of wearing two hats to keep off the sun, which made him more conspicuous to wary game, but more to his being a shocking rifle shot. His great fault lay in obstinately shooting from the right shoulder when all the time he knew his left eye to be the stronger. He thus threw on the weaker eye the burden of finding the sights and doing the whole business, with the result that the stronger eye invariably asserted itself and put the other off. Men who devote much time to billiards, or similar games of skill, are always apt to be left-eyed or right-eyed without knowing it themselves. In

billiards, for instance, the work is mainly done by the eye that looks down the cue. John Roberts never knew his own habit of playing with the left eye till I told him of it. W. G. Peall, too, played with his left eye, and that is why his chin was always so close to the cue.

If H. was a terrible rifle shot, his man Jack was not much better, for his whole aim when he found game was apparently to loose off his Winchester rifle until the magazine was emptied. As the result of their combined prowess, H. had so far scored just one grizzly bear, and that under circumstances which made it obvious that, unless he bagged the bear, the bear would unfailingly bag him. This brilliant idea seems to have struck H. and his man simultaneously the moment they met the bear coming for them, with drawn-back lips and protruding teeth, in a narrow path in the pine forest. Jack was no flyer with his Winchester, but he managed to fire four shots out of his magazine by the time H. had emptied the two barrels of his ·500. Anyhow, the bear lay dead. Two bullets had gone through him—one through the brain, the other through the forepaw. Master and man were equally emphatic in claiming the brain shot and repudiating the other.

When we started out on this trip it had been arranged that we should take it in turns to kill meat for the camp. Now, the day is lost for the man who is told off to shoot meat for camp, for he has to shoot the first eatable animal he sees, without regard for weight or head, and he has

moreover to gralloch it and carry home the hams and shoulders. When, therefore, I had performed these duties for a fortnight on end, I struck, and the result came very close to mutiny and starvation.

One night, towards the close of our trip, we were smoking the pipe of peace beside the blazing logs, and I thus addressed the despondent comrade of my wanderings—

"Look here, old chap, if you follow the stream for about two miles down, you will come to a waterfall, and to the right of that again you will see a plain crossed by a cañon. Keep that cañon on your right until it disappears from view, and you will find another and larger plain, and that should give you wapiti and buffalo."

I saw that Jack was pricking up his ears in a last flare-up of enthusiasm, and calmly proceeded—

"When at first I saw those wapiti yesterday afternoon I mistook them for antelope. They were so far away that I could not make out the horns. I soon saw, however, that they carried too much throat for antelope. Now, you be off at break of day and bring in a fine head or two!"

I had got all the heads I wanted, and should have liked nothing better than for the poor old fellow to get at least one good trophy before going back home. I had not referred to this subject earlier in the evening because of the presence in our camp of an uninvited visitor. Invitations are in fact regarded as superfluous in the Rockies; and the

new-comer was an impertinent, good-for-nothing blackguard, with the South German type of face and lank, straight hair. None of our fellows said much to him, nor did he say much to us, and the only remark that I remember addressing personally to him was to beg that he would mind where he spat. This Hank—whether Hank Something, or Something Hank, I know not—picked up odd jobs driving cattle on the ranches, and he had now found his way here, with another of the same kidney, on what they were pleased to call a skin-hunting expedition. They had camped on the banks of the stream near by, and Hank had strolled into our camp and sat himself unbidden down to supper. Well, it was the custom of the land, and we bowed to it; but it was a relief when, having satisfied his hunger, he unobtrusively left us.

Tom Collins was early astir next morning making up the camp fire, for the fact is we all wanted H. to get a good wapiti, the men quite as much as myself. H. and Jack went off, and I loafed around and caught a few trout while Collins washed up, after which we set out together for the head, skin, and meat of a wapiti that I had killed the evening before. As we were back in camp before sunset, I settled down in peace with a well-thumbed edition of "Vanity Fair," a companion that had satisfied me these six weeks and that was to accompany me on many other sporting expeditions. I fully hoped and expected that H. and Jack would come across so much game as to make them very late in

returning, and I prepared to wait up for them. My astonishment was therefore considerable when I beheld the two of them strolling into camp while it wanted yet an hour to sunset. They looked sullen, and it was obvious that their quest had failed. My inquiry as to their luck was met by H. with a curt condemnation of America and all things American. Diplomacy suggested silence; let the other side open the case! It did, under the thawing influence of coffee, blacktail deer steak, and curried tinned prawns, and this is the tale we heard.

"We followed your instructions," said H., "and reached the far end of the cañon about ten o'clock. Then we saw before us the plain and the game, just as you had foretold, and with the aid of the glasses we proceeded to select a band that appeared to have some fine heads in its midst. These animals were feeding in a place where the ground was clearly favourable to stalking, and everything promised well. We tied up our horses and began the approach, and soon we descried two splendid bulls right under us. We crawled to a ridge less than a hundred yards from the game. I was to take the left-hand bull and fire first. Jack was to wait and then take the one on the right. Noiselessly I got up to the ridge, poked my nose quietly over, and, with infinite precautions against noise, slid the rifle along till the bull gave me a perfect broadside. I was just squeezing off, when the other wapiti looked apprehensive and began bunching up as though alarmed, though we could

not have approached more cautiously. Suddenly a wild 'Hullo!' sounded from somewhere behind us, and there on a rock stood that —— Hank who came into supper last night.

"'It's a free country!' says he; and without more ado he up with his Winchester and blazed away at the wapiti, all in full gallop by now, until his magazine ran out. Of course he hit nothing. Jack swore. I merely remarked that I was sick of this d——d country and that we had better get back to camp. And—that's all!"

It was, surely enough, and the silence that fell on the camp was broken only by the grim whistling (by Jack) of "A Hot Time in the Old Town To-night!" For some reason or other I looked at him, but his eyes were dreamily fixed on the fire, and as he beat a tattoo with his long knife on a pewter plate his face wore a peaceful expression, which seemed to say, "Yes, he bluffed us and won that hand, but he might lose the next unless he has a royal flush and a revolver to back it!"

Nothing would induce H. to try his luck again on the morrow. No more of it for him! He would pack and then . . . home! Seeing that his determination was irrevocable, I asked whether he would mind Jack coming out for the day with me, as the wind was right to hold them our way, and I might get a shot at the same beasts. He gladly acquiesced, and Jack nodded his own approval of the arrangement. We turned in fairly early, and from Hank we had no visit that night.

I always liked Jack, a handsome, cheery, reckless fellow, always willing and handy, able to find his way back to camp, too, on the blackest of nights. His had been a chequered career, for he had started life as cabin-boy on the *City of Boston*, and soon after he left her she went down in the Atlantic with all hands. Then Jack drifted west and took

DONE!

to killing meat for the stores and ranches during summer and autumn. In winter time he trapped beavers.

We were off with the dawn, and this time we made up our minds not to turn along the edge of the cañon, but to keep it at right angles and push on straight for a mile or so until we came to good

spying ground commanding the level country beyond the ridge. It seemed to us that the wind should have taken the wapiti in that direction. The sun burst forth to cheer our hearts and warm our hands and feet half an hour before we got to the ridge. The view that opened out before us when we reached the ridge was a superb transformation from winter to summer, for the sun had soon licked up the snow, and what we now saw was an undulating valley with long golden grass, on which, no doubt, pastured the many game animals that roamed in the neighbourhood. Along the bed of the valley meandered a silver thread of water, while on the opposite hill sparse firs broke the sky-line, and massed to form a wood at the summit.

Knowing well that nothing short of going down wind on a recently skinned grizzly moves a Cayuse pony, we left our animals merely standing with the reins dropped over their heads and crept to the ridge. I soon had the glass on some wapiti, with but one bull, a splendid fellow, in their midst, grazing on the other bank of the stream some miles away. Jack then planned that we should tether the ponies, cross the stream somewhat higher up, and go down on the game from the other side, following the edge of the timber.

"You see," he explained, "if he gets away wounded into that timber, he'll do for us, sure!"

In this apparently practical plan of campaign I acquiesced, and when we had covered what seemed to be about three-quarters of the intervening space

we took observations from a knoll that ought, we thought, to command their feeding grounds. There they were, sure enough, the grand bull and another with but one horn. The second had probably been lying down when we first sighted them. They were all feeding unsuspectingly, so we were soon off the knoll again and pressing on above them. The hillocks in patches made it first-rate stalking ground, and all of a sudden Jack stopped short, stood on tiptoe and craned his neck forward. For a second, perhaps, he stood motionless in that strained attitude, then fell back and motioned me with his finger to a mound just before us. I grasped his meaning, and crawled up the mound, meanwhile nipping the loose cover off my rifle.

"Take the one-horned bull after I fire," I whispered, at the same time sliding the rifle along the top. There was no time to lose, for the animals were up now and gazing past us at some object behind. I had covered the big bull, and was just pressing the trigger, when . . . bang! The big bull staggered and jumped, and at the same moment a voice behind me bawled out—

"It's a free country!"

In a flash it struck me that Hank had played the same trick again, but I never took my eyes off the big bull. He was standing again now, but the cows had bunched up, and one of them stood right between me and the prize. Bang again! and this time the intervening cow fell dead. Now my ·450 rang out, and the big bull gave a terrific leap

and galloped off. And now, for the first time, Jack fired, presumably at the one-horned bull, though I happened to be looking in its direction and never even saw the dirt fly up. At the same time I seized rifle and glass and dashed forward in the direction taken by my vanishing bull. A

A LOG CABIN.

hundred yards or so ahead I again came to rising ground, and there, some little distance further on, I saw the band of wapiti walking slowly, as it were reluctantly, away, and then stopping and looking back. A glance through the glass assured me that the big bull was not of the party, though the one-horned fellow was there right enough. At what,

then, were they looking back in that curious way? A sudden hope was soon confirmed by the sight of the big bull staggering round the edge of a hillock, and I soon had the glass on him. His tongue was hanging out; he was in woeful plight, and as good as dead; yet the excitement of the moment (let me be frank) left no room for the thought of pity that came later. All I had now to do was to drop back out of sight and make a detour to get closer. Stiff and wounded he might be, yet I well knew that to miss and scare him might result in sending him miles yet, probably into the forest, where pursuit would be hopeless. I made a pad of the rifle cover, laid it on a stone, slid the rifle along it, and aimed carefully behind the shoulder. And down to earth crashed the big head that has for many years now looked peacefully down from the wall of my dining-room.

"Bravo, boss!" came Jack's encouraging voice, as I stood over my prize.

"Confound that Hank!" was my reply, "he nearly lost me this; indeed, I am pretty sure he hit the beast before I even fired. See, here's his bullet mark far back."

"Guess, boss," said the imperturbable Jack, "guess by the rules of gunnery, or forestry, or whatever they call it, he's Hank's beast . . . but . . . then . . . I kinder reckon Hank won't claim!"

I looked quickly up at him, this not being my first trip out west, but he was busy filling his pipe.

"You see, boss," he added, after lighting it with

marked deliberation, "pussons can't afford after all to be so d——d free in this country!"

There was a little sequel that is just worth telling. That night, after we had got back to camp and had our supper, Hank's partner came somewhat excitedly into camp and wanted to know if any one had seen his friend. We all shook our heads, and he then suggested that we should institute a search party next day. Some one rudely advised that he should do his own searching.

Then it was that he looked pointedly at Jack and said that, as Hank had followed us, Jack ought to know something about him. Jack rose rather lazily, rifle in hand, and said, very quietly—

"Look here, Mr. Whatever-your-name-is, if your pard has been follering pussons about, maybe he's follered the wrong lot. Now, clear!" This he promptly did, and next day we moved home.

II

REINDEER AND TROUT IN NORWAY

THERE are few sportsmen, given the opportunities, who do not at one time or other find their way to Norway. That land will in all probability continue to attract them until either the game is shot out or the eternally revised and tinkered game laws make the country worthless as a playground for the foreigner. Of the latter discouragement there is every chance at no distant future; the former would seem yet far off. The fact of much wild life surviving in Scandinavia which has long since been exterminated in most parts of Europe is an anachronism for which the inclemency of the climate may be held in great measure accountable. Even during August and September the visitor may, as will be seen from my own humble experience, be subjected to hardships and discomforts that would taboo the country in the eyes of many sportsmen to whom comfort is a necessary condition of their holiday.

Those who "do" Norway from the deck-chairs

of "personally-conducted" steam yachts can have very little grasp of the hard climbing and rough living that go to the successful pursuit of elk and reindeer, trout and ryper, and these hardships will, in such a climate, always prove sufficient of a deterrent to ensure the survival of wild animals north of the sixtieth parallel long after the rifle has rusted in more genial latitudes. The very abundance of birds and beasts of prey—gluttons, wild cats, wolves, lynxes, and the largest predatory hawks and owls—as set forth in the official returns of Government premiums paid for their destruction, is strong evidence of the wealth of game animals on which in the ordinary course these creatures must prey. As for the angler's prospects, it should be borne in mind that, while most of the salmon rivers are hopelessly monopolised by native or foreign agents or syndicates, there must long be practically free and very admirable trout fishing.

It was in the middle of August a few years ago that I embarked on the *Venus*—I have not permitted myself the usual irony of the "good ship"—bound for Stavanger and Bergen. The outward voyage was fortunately as short as it was beastly, with all the horrors incidental to a small boat in rough weather, and I willingly pass over its commonplace discomforts and commence my narrative with our arrival at Bergen after the too brief stretch of beautiful fjord scenery between that port and Stavanger. The first experience which a fellow-passenger and myself had of Norway was not wholly encouraging, for, in a

frantic and long baffled quest of the customs, we tersely addressed ourselves to the first chance wayfarer in the neighbourhood of the quays, hoping that he might understand so much English, with the one word, "CUSTOMS!"

"Manners ferst, ye'd better stoodie!" came from this blue-jerseyed gentleman, who then turned on his heel and left us aghast.

At length, however, we found the Customs, and there I had to pay duty on three boxes of stores, in the choice of which, as later experience showed, were many sins of both omission and commission. Least of all this imposition did I resent the two shillings per bottle charged on my whiskey, which was certainly worth that, and more, in excess of the native article.

That first evening I inspected the stock, and particularly the flies, of an excellent tackle shop, kept, if I remember rightly, by a man named Craig Milne, as well as one or two of the very poor local music halls, and I had to be out at 5.30 next morning to catch the boat for Eide. This meant more fjord travelling, and here, let me say, without any intentional disrespect, that when you have seen one fjord, you have practically seen them all —the same ranges of mountains, one topping the other, away to the horizon; the same short and scrubby trees; the same little wooden houses in the same green clearings. Variety is hardly the charm of Norwegian scenery.

It was ten that night when we reached Vik, or

Eideford—these are only two names so far as I could make out, for the same spot—and we at once repaired to the largest and most comfortable hotel that I saw in the country, kept by the brothers Naesheim. The cooking was good, and the Scotch whiskey so excellent that I regretted for the first time having brought mine and paid duty on it. The only indictment which I had to bring against the hotel was the fact of the sheets going only half-way down the bed, which was, moreover, constructed on some simple principle that precluded the homely process known as "tucking up." This I afterwards found to be general throughout such parts of Norway as I stayed in; still the arrangement was peculiarly distressing to one whose repose, like mine, is continually broken by the remembrance of past crimes.

It was late next morning when I awoke, and still later when Nils, who was to combine the functions of chef and interpreter, joined me. There were the ponies to be shoed and stores to be sorted, for we were taking with us only enough for one week and leaving Nil's son to journey backwards and forwards with the mails and such further stores as should from time to time be required. At length we got off, and our road ran, as do so many roads in Norway, beside a good-looking salmon river with the invariable clear water of these snow-fed streams. At last the river broadened to a lake—some of the lakes thereabouts are so small that you hardly know

where the river ends and the lake begins—and at the head of the lake we had to take the ponies out of their little carts and put the pack-saddles on them, for we were now to leave the beaten track. This adjusting of pack-saddles has to be done somewhat nicely, as the total burden must not exceed 160 lbs., and this again must be almost accurately divided into two loads of 80 lbs. each. Our path now marched with a roaring stream that dashed between narrow, lofty banks, and on all sides, as far as eye could reach, grew the infinitely puny and monotonous dwarf birches that now struck the keynote of the vegetation. The only really conspicuous feature in the scene was the number of wooden windlasses fitted with enormous lengths of wire, their purpose being the conveyance of hay and other material from the heights down to the valleys beneath.

For the next hour and a half we were trudging over steep ground, our first halt being at a typical little Norwegian village, in one cottage of which dwelt Ole, my stalker that was to be. The village nestled so close to the sheer side of the mountain that one cottage seemed piled on the other, and a very curious effect was obtained, particularly after a fall of rain, by the local practice of covering the roofs with birch bark and a coating of earth. The earth was full of grass seeds, which sprouted with the least moisture, so that the cottages looked for all the world as if they were surmounted by hayfields. Nor was this picturesque

appearance their only virtue, for I was given to understand that a roof thus protected would go fifty years without wanting repairs.

Ole was up on the hills when we arrived, but we were received by his venerable mother, a lady aged ninety-two and bearing an almost family likeness to the late George Carter, huntsman to the Fitzwilliam. His wife soon joined the party, and after shaking us

OLE'S COTTAGE.

affectionately by the hand, forthwith proceeded to make coffee. The interior of her little dwelling was irreproachably clean, though once again my bed had the inevitable short sheets. On one wall of my room were some homespun mats, presumably intended for sale to tourists; on another hung three remarkable prints, one representing an infant in the arms of a lady, a second depicting a winged person about to

Art Repro. Co. London.

Drawn by J. G. Millais

Reindeer.

quit a sorrowing crowd of kneeling relatives and creditors and soar into the clouds, and a third purporting to set forth the "Fashions of Bergen." In this restful company I soon fell asleep, which was as well, for we would have to be stirring early next morning if we were to get through our long march. The ascent was very steep for the first hour, the ponies having to zigzag in order to get on at all. Then followed an hour's march along more level ground, where the scenery was very beautiful, showing us wooded glens and miniature cascades, with continual peeps into the valley we had left. Once through the pass, we took leave of tree life, and henceforth rugged and broken ground stretched before us to the not distant horizon. Four hours after leaving Ole's cottage we came upon a dairy shanty where, during three months of the year, they make a cheese that is in some request locally, and here we rested for an hour and drank milk. Soon after midday, however, always keeping before us the considerable distance of the day's goal, we took the road again, and now followed the least picturesque and most wearisome part of the whole march. The monotony of some Scandinavian scenery is maddening to any eyes but those that first opened on such wastes. Mile after mile, hour after hour, of sameness! You turn a corner with some hope of a change where the hills meet the plain, and you find another endless plain stretching ahead of you. The herbage looks, at any rate to the casual observer, good enough to support thousands of

sheep in summer time, yet there is so little sign of life that the land might be accursed.

Towards seven in the evening we drew near Sandhaus, our destination for the night, and that evening for the first time I saw old tracks of reindeer. The small size of the hut alarmed me no less than the sight of a large and motley company gathered about the door, three Norwegian gentlemen out "sporting," with their six gillies and three dogs, not to mention a native lady, a sister of the lady who owned the hut, who had joined our caravan in the last stage. I hardly thought that so many could find accommodation in a building of such modest pretensions, but Nils, who knew more of such things, urged me forward, and the result was that I spent a very jovial evening. The way in which Norwegian peasants can stow themselves in small space is nothing short of marvellous. The three gents were very amiable and civil, and talked their best English for my benefit; and I shared a small room with a Mr. Grann, a Bergen consul who rents a number of sporting rights, and from whom, in fact, O. takes Hansbu, where I was on my way to shoot. They were just down from Hansbu, and had much to say of the glorious fishing they had left there. This was encouraging.

As another march of three hours only would bring us to our destination, we took things easy next day, and I stayed back to see my new friends off, Grann going in search of reindeer and the other two after ryper. I caught myself secretly

marvelling over the kit of the ryper shooters, their guns old and rusty, their clothes little suited to the wear and tear of such rough sport, until I remembered suddenly what an unwashed blackguard I must look myself.

We got through the last stage of our long and uneventful journey in a downpour of rain, and at length we meandered down a small pass that brought us abruptly on the Castle of Hansbu. The Castle! Could even Sir Walter Scott have made much of it? As in other mediæval edifices of the same period, its walls were of unhewn stone, with windows to admit the light and a hole in the ceiling of the entrance hall to receive the generous smoke of the piled brushwood that burned in an old-fashioned stove. The ground covered by the Castle was roughly a square measuring eight-and-a-half yards each way, and beneath it ran a pretty river full of splendid but fickle trout that rose freely to the fly when the weather and temperature were favourable to such artistic overtures, and as freely to the worm when, as was more often the case, they were not. The interior of the Castle could at least boast the virtue of simplicity. The flooring of the entrance hall was what the architect found there on choosing the site! On the right was an apartment which combined in itself the functions of dining-room, sitting-room, and chief bedroom, an arrangement by which the chief occupant was spared much unnecessary running about. On the left was a corresponding chamber that served as

kitchen and servants' quarters, the cooking being accomplished on a small spirit stove. Such, in fine, was the Castle.

The next morning—as season is of some interest to sportsmen, I mention that it was August 22nd —I started off in search of reindeer with Ole, and a strange sight he looked, his trousers girded up into knickerbockers with the aid of long garters, his hand proudly grasping an antiquated musket that looked too innocent to alarm even a self-respecting caged bird. Touching this musket, Nils respectfully corrected my first impressions, assuring me that in its owner's hands the piece was capable of terrific execution. That day, at any rate, it had no chance, for, though we came on numerous tracks of reindeer, beasts we saw none. I did not find it particularly hard walking over the springy reindeer moss, though the stones were bad in places and played the mischief with the nails in my boots. I should, in fact, call it ideal stalking ground, with plenty of broken ground and no abrupt climbing. My only mistake was having brought the ·450 instead of the Lee-Metford—only half the weight. As I carried my own rifle on these occasions, this would in future be a consideration.

We were out early again on the Monday, and walked for a couple of hours in a south-easterly direction over some stony, hilly country, which brought us to a height that overlooked the Blaanoten Flat, a favourite tract of reindeer ground. After spying some time through the telescope, I

made out two reindeer feeding on a grassy slope about half a mile distant. Seeing that they carried horns, I wrongly assumed that they must be bucks, for I had not yet grown accustomed to the fact that the hinds carry antlers as imposing as those of average red deer stags. I also realised, perhaps for the first time, since trophies and drawings impress these things indifferently, the curious formation of these reindeer antlers, with the conspicuous "plough" in front, then the forward tines, and most of the points close together at the tops. My subsequent conviction was that these first animals were hinds. Ole could not, or would not, see them, but I insisted on a stalk, and we reached the spot where they undoubtedly should have been, only to find them gone. Thinking that they must have fed on, we worked up the valley, and as there was still no sign of them, we turned up the hill to the right and returned along the top. Here, in some broken ground, we came right on top of them just over a knoll, and, needless to say, they were out of shot before our rifles could be got in position, though Ole's patriarchal blunderbuss sent a parting benediction their way. I afterwards found, with no great satisfaction, that this was his invariable practice in such cases. They had fed up the hill instead of keeping along the valley, as by all rule and precedent they should have done—that is the worst of animals that do not play the game as laid down in sporting books—and were in fact not

two hundred yards from where I had first seen them.

After lunch we again spied the flat, and I saw a herd in the distance, almost on the sky-line. This time Ole was so good as to see them too, and we got up within a hundred and fifty yards of them. They were lying down, one big fellow slightly apart from the rest, and on him I got the rifle and waited patiently till he should get up. This he at last did, and I had the satisfaction of bagging a fine buck. My first bullet went, as we afterwards found, right through the centre of his body, but it took a lot of running and two more bullets to lay him low. Ole's parting shot on the present occasion dropped a calf. (I resented these parting shots, which were against all my notions of the sport, but as I should not be long enough in the country to reform my stalker's sporting code, I held my peace.)

The reindeer are finer animals than red deer, their coat being particularly soft. Ole's skill in skinning and cutting them up compelled my admiration more than his shooting, for it took him only a very few minutes with his short-bladed Norwegian knife to skin the shoulders and haunches and remove every particle of eatable meat. His next act was to scoop out a hollow in the stones; into this went skin and meat, and the head, still attached to the skin, was drawn back to cover the meat, which, in one of these improvised cairns, will remain fresh and good for weeks in cool weather.

Next day we were out again, the wind blowing fresh from the south, and we spied a small herd before lunch. Ole blazed at an ill-starred cow, and I missed a bull at about 180 yards. (The sight of my Lee-Metford has to be taken very full at 100 yards, and I expect I went under him.) Besides his skinning abilities, I found that Ole was excellent at "going in" at deer, a virtue ignored by many Scotch stalkers, some of whom I have seen go absolutely off their head when within 200 yards of deer. They would crawl and cringe and crouch in burns (and they would burrow in rabbit earths if there were any), and at last they say, "Shoot!" and, if you miss, they let you know on whom rests the blame.

In the afternoon we again sighted our friends of the morning, and I brought one down at 80 yards, which, to my great disgust, proved to be a well-grown cow. We "cairned" her all the same.

Next morning we found that the wind had gone round to the north-east—a hopeless wind for the stalker thereabouts—so I decided on making a trip to a neighbouring river that I had been advised to look at with a view to securing the rights for another season. I took the shot gun and, walking over, got six ryper, three of them just like our Scotch grouse, except for their white wings, and the other three (grey ryper) like our ptarmigan. I also found the cry of the cock bird to be identical with that of our grouse; and as to measurements, I found that one was 17 inches

from the tip of its beak to the end of its tail and 13 inches at its greatest girth, which cannot be regarded as appreciably different from the similar dimensions of our own bird.

I now saw an interesting and to me novel sight, in the shape of an enormous herd of tame reindeer, on the other side of the river in the Bjornboten district, and these I watched for some time. Some of the bucks' heads were clean, though all the wild heads that came under my notice at that season had the velvet on. I was rather annoyed to find the man in charge of these beasts netting the river, which had been represented to me as preserved. I sent a special message to him, however, begging that he would continue netting, as I did not know who had the sporting rights, for which, all the same, I should certainly never pay. And he, not to be outdone in politeness, sent back word to say that he found my annoyance fully justified in the circumstances. He also thought, however, that he had a perfect right to net that water if he chose, but he would now desist from doing so. Anyhow, my men borrowed his pony to fetch the reindeer meat from the cairns, and while they were gone I fished the Blaanoten lake without success, though Nils had caught a handsome four-pounder on the worm the previous Sunday.

Next day was again cold and raw, the northerly wind still ruining stalking prospects, and in vain we spied various flats with unwriteable names. I, however, learnt a new method of stalking that,

after several hours of futile clambering and crouching, appealed to my somewhat depressed sense of humour. We found a native, that is to say, sitting under a rock on a point that commanded a vast tract of reindeer country. In his lap were an old gun and a pair of binoculars, and there he simply intended waiting until the deer should stalk him.

The 29th of August found us still reviling the same unpropitious wind, and there was in addition a drenching Scotch mist on the hills, in which it was impossible to see fifty yards ahead. As the temperature softened towards evening, I took a fly rod down to the river and caught three brace of trout—one a little over, and the rest a little under, a pound weight; and I found that they rose for a few minutes only at about half-past five. Next afternoon I did considerably better, my best three fish averaging three pounds each. It was, however, too late for the fly on that river, and the worm did all the best work.

That evening, too, I had a visitor to dinner, a Finn or Lapp—some uncertainty attaches in my diary as to which land proudly claimed this object —who was herding a flock of a thousand tame reindeer in the vicinity. His legs were short and his physiognomy that of a Chinaman, but what most impressed itself on my memory was the way in which he wrapped his feet in mountain grasses, a quantity of which he carried with him for the purpose, in lieu of stockings. He had the most

covetable dog I ever saw, a powerful animal, dark in coat, like a Chow, only better built. It had a sharp nose, prick ears, and a tail that curled up over the back. Without this faithful ally the man could not have controlled the movements of a couple of reindeer; with its co-operation he could keep a thousand under his eye. Such are the uses of the "inferior" brutes.

September, which we regard in England as so lovely a month, opened with cold winds, and for the first few days I got no stalking and very few trout. I wandered around watching such domestic animals as there were about the premises, and one singular fact I noticed, and that was the extent to which the herds gave salt to their sheep, sprinkling it on the stones, from which they would then lick it off. This they did with evident relish, and they became in consequence much tamer and less timid than our sheep at home. I was also interested to see how the horses would continually sneak around for a lick, and this made me reflect at the time whether perhaps we ought to put more salt in our stables at home, instead of trusting to the indirect supply of minerals out of the fodder.

The temperature went up on the fifth of the month, and I got a brace of ptarmigan and some good trout of a pound and over, the latter out of a pool in the Bjornboten river. It was not, however, until the 7th, or after nearly a fortnight's interval, that I again got reindeer. Having on that day spied Blaanoten flat without result, we

made a detour by way of Bremerhof and crossed into the hilly ground that lies north of Hansbu, clambering among the valleys till I was sick of it. I was, in fact, on the point of suggesting an adjournment for lunch to a neighbouring burn, where we should get pure water, when, of a sudden, reindeer horns loomed over a knoll not eighty yards away. We lay quite still on the stones, while an old cow, the owner of the said horns, surveyed us in leisurely fashion and then trotted off. It was evident that others were close at hand, and we soon came on a fair buck standing broadside on, some 160 or 170 yards away. I took a sitting shot, which must have hit him pretty hard, for he wheeled sharp round and went away up the hill, tail cocked, and with an action that ought to have taken first prize in any trotting competition. I fired a second barrel, and Ole and I ran forward to the hilltop. At first my buck was nowhere to be seen, when I suddenly espied a pair of horns down in a hollow on the left. We crept and crawled in that direction, and the moment he jumped up to quit I was ready and finished him. My first bullet, we found, had entered where the heart ought to have been, but had glanced off a rib or something and had in consequence come out again a few inches farther on. Next day we stalked two bucks, but somehow missed them, and our only beast was a cow. I wished to spare her, but Ole insisted on our having the meat, so I dropped her in her tracks.

Another week was now to go by without my getting a shot at reindeer—this seems about the proportion of sporting to blank days thereabouts, and I mention this for the benefit of any one with only limited time—and during the interval the coming autumn weather gave us a most disagreeable foretaste of its quality. All the sport I had was confined to a ryper or two and a few trout of two and three pounds and as red as salmon. The weather was grey and wolfish; the sun hid itself for days together; the snow blocked up the doorway, and the wet came through the roof at nights, making a lagoon of the hall that had so far been carpeted with dried trouts' tails and the heads of grouse and quarters of venison. All this is sport! Just when there seemed an early chance of our being snowed up, my men noticed with gratitude that the wind was shifting to a warmer quarter, and the only difference that I then marked was that it brought the snow up in greater quantities.

Matters having improved slightly on the sixteenth, we again got reindeer. The day opened with more than one failure, owing to our omitting to locate the beasts correctly. The fact is, I do not care about sitting down in soft snow, and the telescope cannot be used to good purpose in any other position. Ole therefore miscalculated the whereabouts of the herds, and on one occasion we came up only in time to see them, about 400 yards away, jumping into a little lake, swimming across it, and, without waiting to shake themselves dry,

galloping full tilt up the opposite banks and over a hill. It was, for all the world, like Totnes races in the old days, when the Dart still behaved like a river.

After this disappointment we did a deal of tramping—north, south, east, west—all without result, until at last we saw more deer feeding up under the cliff on our left, and among them a fair buck. The wind was swirling down the gorge, right on to them, and they got it the moment we came in view. Just below the not very large buck I had singled out were more deer, and as there was only a moment to act in, I of course did the wrong thing, opening fire on the young buck, which was just starting to run. A big buck now came in sight close to him, and at this I sent two quite futile bullets. Away went the herd helter-skelter, when suddenly the young buck, at which I had fired a single cartridge, swerved away to the right, and we caught him labouring up the cliffs, where another shot finished his career. Yet I might, had I done the right thing and waited for a certain shot at the big buck, have had one of the best heads I ever saw in the country.

More days of snow and blizzard followed, and I began to think seriously of the return journey. We did try to find deer, but the slipping and floundering in the deep snow was little to my taste, though Ole minded such conditions not at all. My last two buck I got on September 19th, and one of them had a splendid head. To get the

shots I had to sit quite still in the snow for just one hour, watching the herd until the big buck stood up for the shot. The day was warm, however, and this entailed no great inconvenience.

A week later, there being no more sport worth mentioning in the interval, we started on the return march, all downhill this time, and I marvelled continually at the performances of the native ponies over frozen snow. One of these, named "Tam"—he carried the late Duke of Hamilton when he was out here some years ago with Lord Rendlesham—was almost uncanny, so accurately did he guess at hidden dangers, and scarcely less wonderful was the intelligence with which he responded to certain brief cabalistic warnings grunted by his floundering master. On our way down we stayed at a hut belonging to a Lapp herd. This individual was not more than five feet high, and he had the squeaky voice so general among those people. I was much taken with his suit of reindeer skin, a complete outfit, worn black with grease and use, and enabling him, so Ole assured me, to wade waist-high through a river and come out bone-dry the other side.

The last stage of our journey to Ole's cottage, which had been a stiff clamber for us a month earlier, was now a correspondingly steep and slippery descent, and the men hung on the ponies' tails as a sort of drag, an arrangement thoroughly appreciated by those intelligent beasts. We spent a night at Ole's cottage and next morning reached

the village of Hjölmo, which lies at the head of a lake. Here the packs came off and the ponies were once more harnessed to their little carts.

When we came to Vik, I found Mr. Grann and a friend of his fishing for salmon in the river, and one of them had just caught a 14-pounder, full of spawn and black as ink. I understood that this was a very sporting water and that the

REMOVING PACKS IN THE SNOW.

then tenant, Dr. Mackenzie, had on one occasion caught no fewer than eleven fish in a couple of hours.

The hotels on the return journey were decidedly depressing, for the tourist season was over, and, as the last of the Mohicans, I had to shout down many echoing corridors before I discovered the living apartments of those left in charge.

The trip ended with an unexpectedly delightful crossing in the *Venus*, the North Sea behaving on this occasion in a manner that even the most bilious could scarcely criticise. Not until I had nearly reached Newcastle was the one reason for my comparatively poor bag made clear to me. A veteran sportsman, who had hunted much in Norway, was travelling by the same boat, and he told me that he never went out after reindeer without a track dog, such as they use for elk as well. He saw deer, with this assistance, every day he was out, and he bagged ten good heads. And I made up my mind never again to seek reindeer without a thoroughly good hound for my companion.

It may be, however, that I shall not again scramble over the harsh fjelds or throw the fly (or worm!) over the tumbling snow waters. I am not sure indeed that there is any longer the inducement, seeing how the peasant legislature annually bestirs itself to boycott the foreigner, to whom Norway owes greatly needed money, handicapping him more and more in favour of the home-bred poacher.

Still, Norway had, even has, its charms. Here is no luxury of English shootings, not even the comparative comfort of Highland forest lodges; but very fair shooting and fishing is to be had by him who will work for it, and if Nature is a little fickle in a Norwegian August, she is also, on days when her mood is kind, at her very best.

III

THE BIG STAG AT MORSGAIL

PERHAPS the reader has had enough of stalking. He has been with me and the taciturn Ole over snow-covered fjelds after reindeer and with the more communicative Jack after Rocky Mountain wapiti. Yet I would fain recall just one memory of stalking in the old country, and the fact of my success on the day in question having been due to no skill of my own, but wholly to the extraordinary perception of McDonald, my stalker, makes me the more anxious to set down the day's doings, in view of an aspersion that I may have too generally cast on Scotch stalkers in my praise of the Norwegian.

I had taken a deer forest, called Morsgail, in the Lewes Islands, where there were both grouse and deer. One evening I was plodding homeward with McDonald, the best stalker I ever was out with, and he was telling me of a specially fine head in the forest.

"You will always know him," he said, "because

up at the cup two points stick out ahint, like a big carving fark. But," he added, ruefully shaking his head, "I have nae seen him for a gude long time, and it's maybe he comes from Harris."

McDonald had the usual conviction that a stag, however far he may roam in quest of wives or provender, always returns in summer to the corrie where he was born and where he first learnt to dread man, and he therefore concluded that the big stag was but a wanderer that had merely strolled over the march to sample such cranberries as might grow amid the rocks of Morsgail.

I had killed a fair stag that afternoon, and, as the ground at Morsgail is too boggy for ponies, two gillies were, as usual, carrying the carcass in a straight line for home. We had told them that they might go straight over the hill, for we had been on the ground that morning without seeing anything on it. McDonald and I walked along beside the delightful brawling burn that took us round to the left. I mind well that the hour was five in the afternoon, and McDonald was still mumbling about the big stag and another, scarce inferior to it, that he had seen, and his account was interlarded with racy imprecations on the men of Harris for keeping as many good beasts as possible to themselves. Of a sudden I chanced to look up and saw the hillside dotted with deer.

"Psht!" was my brief, but suggestive, remark; and if McDonald had been shot he could not have fallen either quicker or flatter. We had

A LONG STALK.

been sheltered from sight by the high bank of the stream and had regarded the day's shooting as virtually over; but the old habit is strong, and the very sight of deer made me apostrophise McDonald in the manner aforementioned, and my remark floored him instantly.

We soon got the glasses on them, and I could see that there were good stags among them, which fact I imparted to McDonald. This was quite superfluous, by the way, because what he did not instantly see about stags was not worth any one's while to look for. He studied them long and silently, and at last he said—

"Do ye see a big black beast feeding low down and broadside on, almost the lowest beast of the lot? Well, if ye can mak' oot his far horn, ye will see the fark oot from ahint. Yon's the big beast!"

Here was luck, for it was a splendid stag indeed, with a solid ruff on the neck that bespoke age and strength, and, sure enough, a conspicuous fork projecting from the top of the left horn.

It was then that I looked at my watch and then inquiringly at McDonald. It was five o'clock, and it would be dark in an hour's time. This had evidently occurred to the stalker as well, for he stood quietly scratching his black grizzly beard, a sure sign of deep thought with him; and then he gazed along the top far on to right and left. I could not follow his train of thought, but before I could question him I saw the heads of the deer go up, and knew that they were disturbed.

"Aye, it's as I thought," remarked McDonald, in oracular fashion.

"Thought what?" I asked.

"Why, they've joost got the gillies' wind."

And then, of course, I recollected that the confounded gillies would naturally have taken the shortest cut along the top on the far side of the deer. No language was quite adequate to the occasion, though I tried my best; then dramatically vowed that if I had to sleep the night out on the moor I would not be done out of the big stag that way. McDonald was imperturbable.

"It's no gude; they're away now, and the light will na hold," said he; and it was impossible to deny the strength of his reasoning. He then took a long farewell look through the glass at the vanishing herd, shut the glass with a snap and shouldered the rifle.

"We'll get awa' airly the marn," was his next remark. "Mebbe he'll no make Harris the night."

There was nothing for it but to trudge sadly home, and inwardly I felt that I had seen the first and last of the big stag, whether from Harris or elsewhere, for stags go long distances in the night. We were up early next morning, and the news of the big stag having been seen had evidently leaked out, for the head stalker, McIvor, insisted on accompanying us. I fear that I sometimes made him terribly jealous of McDonald, with whom I always stalked whenever I reasonably could. McDonald was the best stalker I

could wish for; McIvor was distinctly bad: the nearer he got to deer, the more nervous and flurried he became and the slower in his movements. I have often known stalkers affected in this extraordinary way. I have seen them crawl for a quarter of a mile scarce daring to breathe, when they could, without risking their chance, have walked and whistled. In this way they waste valuable time, while the deer move on; or their very caution makes some old hind suspicious, and she looks round to see that all is right. The good stalker, on the other hand, makes rapidly for a knoll and says—

"Shoot! You can get no closer."

Off we went, then. McDonald kept the footpath —a "footpath" that one had from time to time to leave to avoid being bogged—for two or three miles beyond the place where we had seen the deer the night before, but I left him unhampered by advice, for I well knew that he was as keen as I, and a great deal better qualified, to find the big stag. The last line of hilltops rising up from the Harris march rose in front of us before he turned off to the left, making straight for some rising ground which gave us a good view of the great basin that lies sheltered beneath this range of hills. In a moment three telescopes were searching every nook and cranny within sight. Everywhere there were deer, too many of them in fact, and we gazed on all sides for many minutes without a word being spoken. I made

out several stags in different parts, but the distance was considerable and I did not see anything which looked to me particularly good.

McIvor was the first to drop his glass, with the remark that there were good beasts there. McDonald, however, continued gazing at a certain spot. I did not dare ask what he saw there, for that is the sure way of falling in your stalker's estimation. To win his good opinion, on the other hand, you must find a good stag before he does and draw his attention to it. He may not say much, but, like the sailor's parrot, he thinks the more.

Hopefully, then, I turned my glass in the same direction as McDonald's, but could only make out some hinds.

"I'm a'most sure it's him," he said suddenly, pointing out a green streak of moss that ran along the foot of the mountain due east of where we sat.

"I've been looking there," I replied, somewhat nettled, "but only hinds can I see."

"Aye, joost hinds and the one big beast." Then he added for my further guidance—

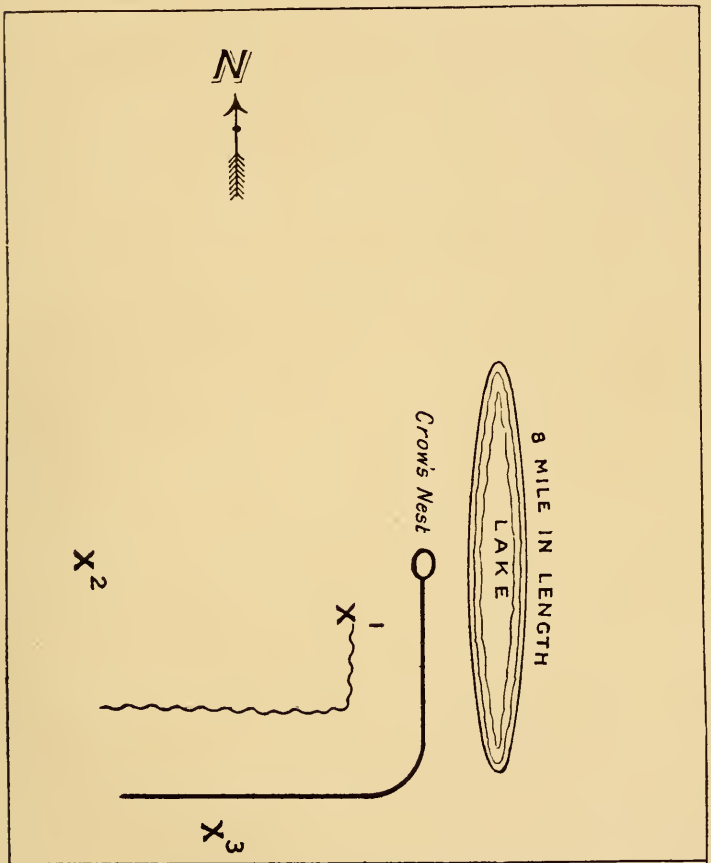
"Follow the burn half-way up the green slope till ye come to a grey-like stone. He's lying behint yon, but ye'll get a sight o' his horns now and again as he moves his head."

Quickly I turned my glass on the green slope, and soon found the grey stone and, after a bit, the horns; but, frankly, I did not think they were the same horns we had seen last evening.

"Are you sure that's he?" I asked.

"Nae sure," was the cautious rejoinder; "but we'll be moving."

McIvor spoke not a word; what he thought of



BURN — HARRIS MARCH.

it all I neither knew nor cared, for my trust in McDonald was strong.

The above rough diagram will serve to show the lay of the land. The curved lines show the direction of the range of hills (the wavy line showing the foot of the hills) beneath which, on the Morsgail side, lay the basin in which the deer were feeding. The ridge terminated abruptly in a sort of crow's nest, from which, many a time, I have gazed over miles of beautiful country, or sat shivering in an October sleet storm waiting for deer to move on. The cigar-shaped lake was the easterly march to the forest, and the line on the right shows the course of the burn at the foot of the valley, south of which lay the sacred ground of Harris. X^1 marks the spot at which McDonald descried the horns behind the grey stone; X^2 was the spot we spied from; and at X^3 happened the finale yet to be related.

Although McDonald had said somewhat peremptorily, "Let's be moving," or words to that effect, it was noticeable that he started off in no apparent hurry, nor did he quicken his pace as we proceeded. As I have, however, said before, the ways of McDonald were not to be questioned. As we plodded on round the far side of the range, with the burn below us, he vouchsafed his reasons for the detour. The wind, he pointed out, was from the north, and, as the deer were in a position in which it was simply impossible to stalk them, all we could do was to get round to the crow's nest and trust to their either moving, or separating, or feeding on before evening. It was a two hours'

trudge to the crow's nest, and close on two o'clock when we got there; but, before lunching, we made a careful and thorough reconnaissance. There were many deer in the basin at our feet, and these could hardly be expected to hail with feelings of satisfaction the apparition of human beings on the sky-line. Now, the stag McDonald had seen ought to be right below us, unless he had moved, and, dodging and crawling, the stalker at length plucked me by the sleeve.

"Aye," he said, "it's him."

Quickly I got my glass out and peered cautiously over a rock. We had less to fear from the deer we were stalking than from others immediately under us. Following McDonald's whispered directions, I soon spied the stag, up now and feeding with a select group of twenty or thirty hinds, and my heart gave a bound as I saw that there could be no doubt as to its being the same big beast of last evening. Plainly I could see the fork jutting back from the top antlers, yet, when I had gazed at him longingly for some minutes, I swiftly realised how long the odds were against my ever getting a shot at him in such circumstances.

Straight from Morsgail Lodge blew the keen north wind, and its direction was its one redeeming point in an otherwise desperate situation, since, if we were obliged to move them, the deer would be more likely to keep up wind and so remain on our ground. So in my wisdom I argued; as things turned out, exactly the opposite took place.

Deer were scattered all over the basin, and it was out of the question to attempt to get near the big stag where he was then grazing. So much at any rate I quite understood as I crept quietly back to find the stalker placidly smoking. When I got back, he crept down and forward for a moment and carefully scanned the scene below, his object being to see whether any of the animals had "got us." Then he looked at me, as much as to say, "Ready?" and we crawled up, keeping well behind friendly rocks whenever we reached exposed spots. At the crow's nest we lunched, and bitterly cold it was; and every now and again McDonald would absent himself for a few minutes to spy out the land and report progress.

Three o'clock came, and four o'clock came. McDonald was beginning to grow restless. He had just returned from one of his surveys. His movements were now rapid and somewhat mysterious. He looked at the sky, at the lake away on our right, at Harris. Then he seized the rifle, gave some vehement and muttered command to the gillies in Gaelic, glanced hesitatingly at McIvor, as much as to say, "I suppose if you will come, you must!" and to me his one word was, "Come!"

We slipped down towards the pass that led from the long lake to the basin. It was obvious that some of the deer would see us and others get our wind, but McDonald trotted on apparently indifferent to such a contingency. I even saw with a sidelong glance that they were bunching; yet on

he pressed. At last we reached the shelter of some rocks, and down he went, and out came his telescope. I did the same, and saw deer everywhere, a hundred or two of them moving over the shoulder to the right, but no sign of the big stag. For a moment, as Mr. Franklin once said to the barmaid, all glasses were down. Then McDonald had him right enough, and in a moment, following his advice, I too saw the big one moving slowly on in company with some twenty hinds. One of these would now and again throw an anxious look back in our direction, but the main company seemed in no way disturbed.

All of a sudden—who could tell the quick workings of that trained mind!—McDonald jumped up as if inspired, rammed the glass into its case, grasped the rifle, and started at a sharp run back the very way we had come. Breathless we reached the crow's nest, and, as we passed the gillies, he uttered some order, and on we pushed along the tops nearer and nearer the burn of the Harris march. Leaving McIvor, who had long been blowing like a broken-winded hunter, McDonald loaded the rifle and slipped the cover half-way off it. A few moments later I heard a loud roar go up a little in front and on the left, while an answering roar came from the right. These sounds had the effect of making my stalker literally spring in the air, and he ran forward at a pace that, if I had not been in condition, must have left me hopelessly behind. A hundred yards further and we were

among rocks, and now McDonald was moving like a cat at a sparrow. Suddenly he bent down and bolted for a large boulder about fifteen yards before us, and winding up the rifle cover, he laid it on the rock and slid the rifle along it. Silently, as he stood aside for me, I cocked the weapon, just as another roar came up from Harris, followed by a stern and sullen reply right in front of us. Quietly and proudly the big beast crossed in front and stood a bare moment broadside on. It was now or never, though the light was bad—it wanted only a few minutes to six o'clock—and I was blown and shaking like an autumn leaf.

Bang! The stag jumped and stood again.

Bang! He turned his head and trotted over the knoll in front.

McDonald was off, and I followed limply with the rifle and cover. Then I saw him stoop as he ran along the edge of the ridge; and he stopped and beckoned to me. He held two cartridges in his hand, and these he rammed into the rifle. Cautiously I peered over the ridge, and there, not twenty yards from me, stood the stag. One more report rang out, and next moment I and McDonald, with McIvor and the gillies, who seemed to spring from the bowels of the earth, were standing over the noble beast close to the Harris march that he so often crossed in life.

Twilight was upon us, and McIvor waited to help the gillies home with the deer, while McDonald put me on my road, telling me at

length what prompted him to make that sudden and profitable dash back along the ridge. As he watched the stag through the glass, it appears he saw him turn his head towards Harris and roar, then bear to the left. Instantly it flashed on him that it might be possible for us to cut the monarch off. Every pass was, of course, known to so good a stalker, but how he worked his plans with such precision he alone knew, and no amount of explanation would have told me.

I had to trudge the last six miles of bog, miscalled road, alone, McDonald branching off to his house in the forest, and it was ten o'clock ere the lights in the upper windows of Morsgail Lodge welcomed me home.

Always I shall remember that day, for that was the most desperate stalk I ever took part in, and the whole success was due to the very remarkable quickness and perception of McDonald.

Always I shall remember that night, and see in memory those welcome lights in the Lodge windows. For the hand that placed them there is still, and the voice that hailed me is silent for ever.

IV

TWO SPORTING VENTURES THAT FAILED

Having now shared with the indulgent reader the memories of some moderate successes in three very different lands, the less agreeable duty remains of chronicling a couple of failures, one abandoned indeed at the outset, to find sport in southern and eastern Europe. So many books and articles are written on where to go for sport with rod and gun, the writers' successes take up so large, and their failures so small, a proportion of these records, that it may be well for me to go off the beaten track and devote a few pages to how I did not succeed in getting sport in either Sardinia or the Albanian highlands.

It was during the latter days of summer, just as I was puzzling over the choice of some out-of-the-way resort for the autumn, that I met an artist friend, one who had travelled much in eastern Europe, and to him I unburdened myself. A projected expedition to Winnipeg after moose

had fallen through, for, although a kind friend had offered me the loan of his kit, which was actually on the spot at Winnipeg itself, every berth on every liner was booked for weeks ahead, and I lacked the energy to cast about for a shakedown in a stokehole.

"Why," asked my friend, "do you not try the Albanian highlands? They swarm with game, and no one has ever been there."

It did not at the moment, though I thought of it when too late, occur to me to ask him how on earth, if no one had been there, he knew that the region was swarming with game. I wish it had. Instead, I strolled home with him, and from amid the weapons of to-day and yesterday and the day before, from under forage caps, helmets, and cuirasses, he brought forth maps and illustrated papers, and gave me much advice touching routes, and a letter of introduction to the Governor of Scutari, and the carrying of a new-pattern revolver, and never going out without an escort. And his descriptions appealed to me in my uncertain mood, and so, on the last day but one of September, I went.

Now, I am not going to detain the reader with descriptions of the railway journey across Europe, from Calais to Milan, of the rudeness of some of the railway officials and the politeness of others, for in these days of World-Travel and Cook, are not all these things written everywhere, so that he who runs may read? Nor need I encroach on the

preserves of Murray and Baedeker with appreciations of the Cathedral—where, at any rate, they keep the statues clean—and galleries of that city. Touching the latter, my regret was, now as always, that the old masters should have confined themselves to biblical subjects when their glorious colouring might more worthily have been applied to modern themes. In the great room of the Galleria Brera, for instance, the only secular paintings represented a lady, by Van Dyck, an old man, by Velasquez, some dogs chasing a deer, by Snyders, and a very charming group of children dancing round a tree, by Francesco Albani. The only other painting in the room that interested me was one of The Last Supper, by Grispi, which differed from other representations of that episode in that the table was not as usual dowered with only meagre fare, but groaned under a wealth of baked pike, fried herrings, roast hare, oysters, and real French bread.

The Customs officials showed themselves disagreeably diligent at the Hungarian frontier, but I fortunately bethought me of a Hungarian passport which I had obtained from the Austrian Embassy at home, and officialdom became at once scrupulously polite, and no more boxes were opened. Then the train ran along beside the blue Adriatic and into Trieste, a city paved with gravestones. At the offices of the Austrian Lloyd Shipping Company, where I had to book my passage for Cattaro, I was so fortunate as to meet with a most

obliging gentleman named de Varda, who showed me where to get shot cartridges and other necessaries. The only building of interest that I visited near Trieste was the famous Palace Miramar, once the residence of Duke Maximilian, who afterwards crossed the Atlantic to become Emperor of Mexico and in due course to get assassinated, after the custom of those troublous regions. Among my few other pleasant memories of Trieste is a very capital wine called Palugyay.

My steamer, the *Graf Wurmbrandt*, was crowded fore and aft, and I had at first to share my cabin with three other passengers. By good luck, however, Mr. de Varda introduced me before starting to Captain Bednartz, who was kindness itself, and who, after our second stop, at Zara, put me in a charming cabin by myself.

We stopped in all four times: at Pola, the Austrian naval station, where naval officers sat sipping coffee outside a café alongside the quay; at Zara, where the whole place turned out to see the boat come in, and where, although the darkness was falling, the scene was still what reporters would have called "animated"; at Spalato; and at Ragusa. In such fine weather as then prevailed, this is a beautiful trip down the Adriatic, threading a course past countless islets, with the grim Albanian mountains towering all around. At Cattaro I took leave of the boat, and had to drive to Cettigne, the fare for which was twelve florins. The road zigzags upwards, and the panoramic

views are magnificent. At the village of Njegus, originally, I believe, the home of the royal family of Montenegro, I saw many fierce-looking men with pistols stuck in their belts, and wondered how, even thus armed, they contrived to find a living in so bare and desolate a country. At length, after an hour's halt here to rest the ponies, we pushed on, with still more of the corkscrew ascent, until, just as it was getting dusk, the summit was reached, and we bowled merrily downhill and round corners, on the edge of a precipice the whole time, and drew up at 8.30 that evening before the door of the Cettigne Grand Hotel. Here again the local wine was excellent, though I learnt that, though it is made on this side, the grapes come from the Italian shores of the Adriatic.

Mr. Shipley, our *Chargé d'Affaires* at the time, was most attentive, and had thoughtfully wired to Mr. Summa, of the Legation at Scutari, to meet me on arriving there. Next morning at six I had to leave for Rieka, and I was soon bowling out of Cettigne, a place with nothing to rave about. Riêka lies at the head of the Lake of Scutari, and here a small boat met me and rowed me to the steamer, about half a mile distant, and in the narrow bow of the steamer I found a table laid for two. It was not, I afterwards discovered, and only just in time to express my thanks for the compliment, customary to serve *table d'hôte* on the steamer at all, and this was an extra attention on the captain's part. There was another passenger

on board the boat whom I had for some reason or other taken for an Austrian, and whom, as I did not suspect him of a knowledge of English, I made no attempt to address. At last, however, after we had dined at the same table, and passed and repassed one another without a word, I did venture to ask whether he spoke English. He did; and so the ice was broken and a most agreeable gentleman he proved to be—the Prince de Béarn, French Attaché at Vienna. The *rencontre* was in every way a fortunate one for me, for M. Summa, of the British Legation at Scutari, does not speak English, so, when I had made them known one to the other, M. Summa insisted on the Prince accompanying us, and putting up at the Maison Paget, the owner of which, Mr. George Paget, was away in South Africa. The prince acted in a way as interpreter between us.

The shores of the lake, between Cattaro and Scutari, looked so barren that not even an Irishman from Connemara would tarry there to plant a potato, and the distant Albanian mountains, as seen through my Ross telescope, looked no whit less inhospitable. Immediately on landing I presented the letter which the Turkish Ambassador in London had given me to the Governor-General at Scutari, and the first result was that my guns and ammunition were passed free through the Customs. The prospects of sport, however, seemed very remote. Both the Prince and Mr. Summa ridiculed the idea, and the captain of the steamer

shared their opinion. The following day I paid my respects to the Governor, and he too threw cold water on my sporting programme; and when, finally, the Italian Consul had called on me and likewise warned me against a too sanguine expedition into the hills, I began to think it about time to abandon the idea and look out for some other hunting ground. In the first place, the expenses of such a trip could not amount to less than a couple of sovereigns a day; secondly, I should have to go far from civilisation, and could count on no regular supply of provisions; thirdly, it would be impossible to find a guide with so much as a smattering of either English or French; fourthly, every one who was likely to know swore that there was no big game left in the interior. These conjointly appealed strongly to me, and I eventually gave up the Albanian highlands, and cordially recommend every other sportsman to do the same.

The bazaars of Scutari are among the chief attractions for the visitor, and there I bought silks and shoes, and took coffee with polite merchants, who displayed their wares in dignified and unostentatious manner, and smoked the best and cheapest cigarettes that ever I held between my lips. There is a good supply of well water in the town, every house in the better quarter having its own private well, though, as these sources of drinking water were so close to the Turkish cemetery, I rather regretted that they should

also be at a lower level. The Governor came to call upon me, accompanied by Mr. Summa and the French Consul, and a very dignified man he was, with big mustache, bushy, well-trimmed beard and sparkling eyes, that could, I understood, look very fierce indeed upon occasion, but that looked on me with the most winning expression. His Excellency was throughout most affable, and was immediately interested in my automatic revolver—Mussulmin have a passion for weapons all the world over—and promptly sent a body servant, an enormous fellow with mustaches like two colts' tails, for his own Mauser. I was greatly impressed by the solemn and dignified demeanour of even the servants in that country. Behind my chair at meals there stood a calm, sedate Oriental, whose honesty and respectful demeanour and old-world dress commanded my respect. You could no more have d——d such a man for something forgotten than flown! Had I been conversant with his language, I felt that it might perhaps have been possible to throw out a suggestion here and there, but anything in the nature of reproof would have been in the highest degree uncouth and out of place. Personally, it does my heart good to see in those around you, even in a menial capacity, a mannerism that might almost be described as nobility, and I never fail to respond to the salute of such as punctiliously as I would to that of the greatest in the land. It is only a cad, a low-bred upstart, who giggles at the

natural politeness of a people accustomed to such ways.

I had determined, then, to abandon the big game, existent or otherwise, of the Albanian highlands, and my thoughts were fixed on Sardinia. It only remained to get there *viâ* Brindisi and Genoa, and the first step was to get across to Italy by the "gran vapore" that touches at Medua. In the ordinary course, a smaller steamer takes passengers the four hours' journey, two by river and two more by sea, to meet the larger at Medua, but the weather was bad and they said that the sea was too rough for the smaller boat to venture. There was nothing for it, therefore, but to make Medua on horseback, and Sef, the cavas, was sent to the bazaars to get the beasts. At half-past eleven he turned up at the Casa Paget with four horses and a man, and they quickly had the packs on so firmly that not a knot slipped, not a pack had to be shifted during a twelve hours' tramp over as rough a road as any one would care to travel. We rode out of the town and along the south end of the lake, at first in pelting rain, but afterwards in bright sunshine. Then we struck a good-sized river, swollen and muddy from the recent rains, and this kept us company till within a mile or so of Medua. To our left lay the discarded mountains of Albania, and very evident it was that the rain of the plains was snow at the higher levels. Very fertile were the plains, with well-tilled patches, and a wealth

of sheep and cattle. Towards evening we branched off across some fields, and were soon riding along a rocky path with the river, on which I saw neither bridge nor boat, bubbling beneath us. At five the shadows began to lengthen, and the Albanian hills took on that peculiar purple tint that recalled London on the day when the good Queen Victoria was laid to rest, but this soon deepened to that other tint which my children will wear for a few weeks after the solicitor has read my will. Now and then, to rest the muscles, I threw one leg over the pommel and rode side-saddle, but this was no track to play tricks on. Just as it became dark, we left the rocky path and resumed our way along wet clay lanes. This seemed to me an ideal land in which to start an illicit distillery, for the inhabitants were friendly and disposed to frustrate the police, and the river also would be convenient in case of a raid. Moreover, having but one drink, and that coffee, they would be the better for a stimulant. I was just going to say that I gave my pony his head, but that would be an idiotic remark, because he had had it the whole time; if he had not, on such a path, we should both have been dead long before. Yet I would rather ride that pony on the darkest night and on the worst of tracks than sit in a London hansom for an hour of the brightest day. About half-past eight in the evening we reached a hamlet, and the horses went into one shed and we into another. This humble dwelling

took me back in memory to a certain highland shanty of my boyhood's days, and we sat by the fire while a small Turkish boy brewed coffee in tiny pots among the hot ashes, and my men and others squatted round the fire and drank soup and ate the sardines as soon as I had finished with them.

Soon after nine we fared forth into the black bat, night, and we were now joined by the man whom I had taken for the owner of the shanty—and so, for all I know, he may have been—and who proved to be the postman between Scutari and Medua. He insisted on riding behind me, Sef and the other man going in front, and every now and then, in spite of a bad cold and cough, he would break out into a fearful wail, presumably some national song, and no sooner had his voice died away than Sef took up the chant, and he in turn gave way to the man in front. This mournful chorus seemed to afford them some relief, but to me the effect was distressing. "Halt, Jan, Halt," the postman would cry every few minutes, but evidently "halt" had not the same meaning as with us, for it was the invariable signal for Sef to hurry up his pony with a responsive grunt.

Medua was reached at midnight, and here we billeted ourselves on another shanty in which all the folks were abed. They soon bustled on the scene, however, and a man brought me a quilt and a pillow and set them on a native couch, and bade me, so far as I could understand his gesticulations,

sleep. He was the host, and in vain I endeavoured, through the medium of our joint atrocious French, to make him tell me at what hour the boat would leave in the morning. He pretended to understand perfectly, and at first he said two o'clock, then five, then ten, and finally he gave it up altogether. The quilt was dirty, and suggested unwelcome associations, and I could not sleep.

The morning broke fair, and disclosed my steamer lying off the coast with a terrific list on, and I soon discovered that she was in the habit of putting in on one high tide and waiting for the next to float her. There was, however, nothing at all to do on shore, except take leave of the excellent Sef, so I got a boat to row me out to her and found everything slanting at an extraordinary angle. Gradually, though, as the tide rose, lamps and other things righted themselves, and just on high water she crept gingerly out to sea. It was blowing pretty hard, and, thoroughly tired out, I lay down till we reached Antivari. It was after leaving there, about five that evening, that we got out into the open sea, and did she not roll! The *Bora*, or north wind did it. Brindisi we reached at two in the morning, and in the darkness I put on my boots and went on deck, but the only visible being was a policeman, not an encouraging apparition at that hour, so I crept below again. At six I awoke and found the sun up and on deck a person who styled himself an "interpreter," and who immediately seized me and my

baggage, and, with the help of another bird of prey, with whom he had a whispered colloquy, dragged me to the Customs house. The solitary official in attendance was too sleepy to look after details, and quietly asked something for letting me go through. And here, since Genoa was for the moment my destination, I made a serious mistake, taking the seven o'clock train through to Milan, a run of four-and-twenty hours, when I ought to have changed at Bologna. As it was, I had a comfortless journey, and then had to come about half the way back! At Salsomaggiore I was so fortunate as to meet Lord Currie, and he gave me a letter to Mr. Keene, of the British Consulate at Genoa, who would be able to help me in my plans touching Sardinia. People seem to visit Salsomaggiore for every complaint under the sun, and there was even a batch of wounded officers here from South Africa, though what salt baths can do for wounds, except make them smart, I do not know. Among their number was a Captain Gordon, who was with poor Jim Clowes when the latter was shot. Often I had wondered what Gordon this could be, and here I ran across him in a remote corner of Italy! I found out that he was Australian, though his forbears were from Scotland. Still, as he said, ancestry don't go for much in Australia. The country round Salsomaggiore is hilly and not without beauty, but as it is a case of "salt water, salt water everywhere," and as thirst is the one thing that I always

wish to avoid, I determined to move on without delay.

Genoa is no place for any one with nerves, for a more noisy city does not exist in Europe. That wild howl of the waggon drivers must surely be taught in the schools, for it is by no means easy to acquire, beginning as it does with a kind of sea-sick gurgle and culminating in a guttural curse not unlike the lowing of kine; then comes the report of the whip, the like of which I have not heard since the old days of black powder. These carts move on two high wheels, and there is generally a powerful mule between the shafts, a variety of other draught animals, mules, horses, donkeys, anything, being harnessed on in front. The owners always seem to load these carts up just a little beyond the combined draught capacity of the poor brutes, and the proverb of the camel and the last straw is not current in Italy.

To Messrs. W. Keene, British Consul, and A. C. Campbell I was under great obligations, for they passed me without a hitch, and sent me on my way, with the necessary introductions, to Cagliari, the capital of Sardinia.

Before quitting the subject of Genoa, I must revert for one moment to the lamentable difference between the Italian and French wines generally, and those obtainable in England, a difference in both price and quality. It may, as a general rule, be laid down as a safe axiom to drink the wine of the country. The waiter, even if he looks like a

mediæval troubadour, will not be above trying to cheat you into paying for some inferior, more costly exotic vintage, but the *vin del paese*, though usually thrown in free in its picturesque flask, is generally the best in any district. At Genoa I again ran across my old Hungarian friend, Palugyay, here six francs the bottle, and an honourable exception must certainly be made in its favour, as better of the kind I never tasted. The extortion of English wine-sellers is a disgrace to our boasted free trade, for a four-shilling claret in London is certainly inferior to the "ordinary" placed on the tables of French or Italian railway stations. A wine exporter, whom I met in Italy, gave me some sort of explanation, to the effect that the lighter wines could only be sent to the English market in bottles, but whether this traffic no longer proved remunerative, or whether it was barred by law, I was quite unable to make out.

My next move was to send my heavy baggage on to Livorno—why our barbarous Anglicism of *Leghorn?*—by the *Adria*, the steamer which was to convey me to Cagliari, while I myself went by train, a beautiful though much-tunnelled track beside the Mediterranean. When the train drew up at Livorno I felt rather uncertain, but, seeing three omnibuses outside the station, I promptly entered one bearing the legend "Hotel Angleterre et Gampari," and found that hostelry comfortable, and the proprietor an excellent fellow who spoke a little English. After a capital dinner, with the

best lettuce salad I ever ate in my life, I induced him to take me round the city, which is hilly and uninteresting, and when we had driven round in a circle for some time, he suggested a Café Chantant. The "turns," of which I stayed to see only two, were not edifying, and had I not seen, in one of the boxes, one of the most beautiful girls I ever set eyes on in any land, the daughter, I believe, of a local banker, the evening would have been wasted.

Mine host gave me great accounts of the *Adria*. Said he, "She is a grand *bateau*. She has sunk four vessels. The last was an emigrant ship from Naples, and she went right through it, cut it clean in two—four hundred lives were lost, but she was scarcely damaged. Her name in those days was the *Ortegioi*, but the owners had to change it, since nobody would travel in her, so they rechristened her the *Adria*. Yes, she is a grand boat, and you have nothing to fear." I could only murmur a faint hope that there would be no need of a further rechristening at the end of this voyage.

From the good Mr. Destifanis I parted at a little before midnight and went aboard. At any rate the *Adria*, registered 1,800 tons, was a comfortable enough craft, with good cabins and artistic decorations. The mountains of Corsica loomed on the starboard bow when I went on deck at nine next morning, but they were scarcely distinguishable.

At Cagliari I put up at the hotel Scala di Ferro, and the dinner there, though far from bad, was

about the most singular form of *table d'hôte* imaginable. To a couple of dozen visitors there was just one waiter, a haughty aboriginal who was mostly occupied with the evening paper or in snatches of conversation with some favoured *habitué*. The remarkable part of the dinner was that it seemed to lie with the waiter to distribute a somewhat limited supply of a variety of dishes. Nearly every one got soup, it is true, but then the allotment began. As the soup contained macaroni, cheese, and beans, among other ingredients, I could not find it in me to regret not getting all the other *plats*, and indeed it was amusing to see an undisguised lack of the same contentment on one or two other faces For instance, I got no fish, but instead a veal cutlet. The man opposite to me got fish, the man on my left got *rognons sauté*. No. 1 on right of man opposite got a snipe; man on his right again, two raw eggs, from which he dexterously extracted to the uttermost the yolks, discarding the whites, and consumed them with wine and sugar in a tumbler. I had a partridge after the fish, and waited some time just to see how things were going, but the waiter seemed to think that I had eaten sufficient, and I got nothing more. Coffee and cognac, in a little salon all to myself, gave me a kinder view of life, and I turned with interest to a portly red volume, possibly an illustrated edition of Dante, and found it to be—"Healing Leaves," a wonderful American publication on the efficacy of prayer as a remedy for all

ills. Just as I was swooning over this drivel, there entered a pale, weary-looking man, with nothing about him to pronounce his English nationality, yet it was in unmistakably perfect English that he said, referring to a book that he placed before me—

"Read that. It will interest you."

This was a Mr. Smith, of some British Consulate or other in Asia Minor, and he was over here for a few days photographing interiors. He showed me several capital photographs of church interiors, and I suggested that they would do admirably to illustrate a book on the subject.

"Ah," he replied wearily, "it will take me ten years!"

Now, a man who can knowingly embark on a work of church interiors that will take ten years in the making deserves encouragement, and I felt as much, and ventured to suggest coffee, cognac, and cigarettes, only to learn that he eschewed all three. The book that he had lent me was "A Guide to Sardinia" or "A Ride through Sardinia"—I forget the exact title—and in it was a dedication "To my friend Snooks I dedicate this book, not because I consider him any judge of a book, but merely because he is my friend." This was agreeable, to start with, and if I could have learnt anything of Sardinia from the work I should have been still more grateful. Yet, beyond much lore touching the ancient history of the Lollards and Saracens and other erstwhile owners of the island,

told me little beyond the fact that the author had ridden to Aritzo, and that his guide had pleaded fever, but that he (the author) put the fellow's indisposition down to drink. I do not, above all so far down in this chapter, pose as a writer of descriptive travel, but if I were writing of Pall Mall for some magazine in New Zealand, I should not merely describe it as a "wide thoroughfare patronised by Royalty and containing many Clubs," but I should particularise a little more, starting with Marlborough House and the unfortunate "Junior Gentility" (once Senior Respectability) Club next door, and then crossing the road to the stationer's shop, where can be purchased photographs of European Royalties and this book, and that of Hardy Brothers, with its profusion of fishing tackle. Then I should touch lightly but respectfully on the Rag., where veterans sip whiskey and vote that the army is gone to the d——, on the Junior Carlton, mainly composed of men who do not belong to the Senior Carlton, and so on and so on. Also, I should be careful to point out that it is possible for any one to buy boots in Pall Mall if he has either sufficient money to pay for them or sufficient assurance to obtain credit. All such practical hints, however, the author of the Guide ignored, merely remarking that no one would give him accommodation anywhere in the island. Probably, he looked too clean,

Mr. Smith knew all about me and my plans, and just before he took his leave—he had two

hours of developing before him before going to rest—he produced a small bottle and asked, in a mysterious and husky voice—

"Taking any?"

The bottle was labelled "Quinine Globules," and when I repudiated any intention of taking any and asked why I should, he shrugged his shoulders and whispered the one ominous word—

"Malaria!"

Then he took the bottle, left the book, and was gone as silently as he had come.

Why a man can never leave his native village without some kindly but officious person ramming physic down his throat and filling his mind with all manner of totally unnecessary presentiments, I have never been able to discover. When you go shooting at home, in hill or swamp, you do not load up with the contents of an apothecary's shop! Yet no sooner do you venture abroad, especially in search of sport, than you are at once warned, under all sorts of pains and penalties, to abandon whiskey and take quinine in its place, and never to go out after dark without wearing a flannel, magnetic belt!

All the same, Mr. Smith was a superior person. He would never go after Sardinian moufflon, not he, for must they not be wretchedly small? It was well known, he said, that the wild sheep increased in size as you went east; in the Caucasus, in Asia Minor, in Persia, the animal grew in size, until, in Thibet, you came across the *Ovis poli.* I admired Smith deeply, and I thanked God, since I hate to

be rude, that there was not enough light for him to want to photograph my interior.

At six next morning I was in the train and had twelve weary hours of it at a pace that vividly recalled the Deeside Railway of my boyhood, where you walked beside the train as far as Banchory and helped to shove it along if your destination lay beyond. At six in the evening I reached Lanusei, the views from the train during the last forty minutes of the journey being superb, with a winding upward track in the mountains, distant views of the plains and sea, then a zigzag descent, with three or four views of Lanusei before that town is finally reached.

The accommodation, even the best of it, to be found in Sardinia is about the dirtiest in Europe; and ladies accustomed to even the simplest home comforts, and reluctant to dispense with them even temporarily, should give the island a wide berth. The people mean well, and, beyond talking at the top of their voices and exercising somewhat New World freedom in their spitting bouts, they are sufficiently agreeable. Some affect the civilised garb of Western Europe, and thereby succeed in closely resembling the peasants of the poorest districts of Ireland, while others retain the apparel of their forbears—large black flap cap, black jacket, loose white pants and black puttees. This picturesque, albeit sombre costume, is completed by a large knife stuck in the belt, and a long-barrelled gun is sometimes slung over the shoulder.

I put up at the only hotel, the ground floor of which seemed to be a sort of store where they sold macaroni, candles, wine, and other articles. One of the most striking evidences of the country's apathy, I thought, was the fact that, in spite of a most luxuriant growth of fruit out of doors, it was impossible to get a pot of jam. Indeed, I found the available stores for camping out distressingly limited; nasty uncooked preserved fish, strong raw sausages or ham, which any one would be fined £5 for selling in London as unfit for human consumption, and suchlike atrocities.

On the following morning I made my start under no very happy omens, for there was first a funeral—most of the ceremony took place in the public square—and then a terrific thunderstorm. This was not all, for the man who had gone on ahead with my baggage in a cart returned after an hour or so with the unwelcome intelligence that he would be unable to proceed further as a swollen river blocked his road. All this sort of thing is part of the day's work, so we possessed ourselves in patience until another cart was procured equal to the task. It subsequently transpired that the particular river in question had not been affected by the rains, the action of which was local. Still, the risen waters were not powerless, as was to be seen from the *débris* of a substantial stone bridge which had been carried away. A drive of four hours out of Lanusei brought us to a large house which was occupied by the men at work on the road and

their families; the middle room was assigned to me on the strength of my permit from the Consul at Cagliari, and the remaining unoccupied room was a sort of Travellers' Room for the use of men passing to and fro who might want to rest there for the night. I was very glad on this occasion, as indeed on others, that I had brought out with me one of the folding camp beds supplied by Wilkinson of Pall Mall, else my night's rest would not have been worth much purchase.

And now the second failure of this European trip was gradually realised, for I tramped those hills for many days and saw moufflon indeed, but never a shot did I get at the males. The females and kids I could have shot many a time—I remember at least three such chances on three separate occasions—but the old males baffled all stalking within the limited time at my disposal. Those who want to work well for their beasts, and who despise the comparative ease of Scotch deer forests, might do worse than try Sardinia and its moufflon. Through your telescope you see flocks of tame sheep and herds of cattle on the summit of some mountain that must take hours to climb. After some days the butter gets rancid, the Lanusei bread, never much to boast of even in its youth, gets more and more stale, the eggs possess an element of doubtful utility, the meat grows more and more stringy, and still you have to go plodding and plodding those weary ascents without ever getting nearer to the objects of your desires.

Walking is not difficult, it is true, for the men and horses and sheep and pigs of the island make paths and tracks upon every yard of the hillside, over the highest tops and through the scrub; indeed, it is difficult to understand what on earth all these creatures live on, for there seem to be about two English blades of grass to the acre, and the rest of the undergrowth consists of prickly scrub in one form or another. Yet over these hills range countless herds of sheep that look painfully gaunt and hungry. At the end of October and beginning of November the shepherds drive all these domestic animals down to the lowlands, and there they bide for the winter. The only prosperous-looking native of the island was the moufflon, and his shyness was distressing to a degree. Perhaps he was once a domestic sheep long since gone wild, or so, at least, I understand him, and maybe he butted the calf of the Saracen or Lombard and betook himself to the highest hills in the stormy times that followed. As Goldsmith might have put it:—

> "Of women wary and of men afraid,
> His eye the searcher and his horn the spade. . . ."

Let me briefly—very briefly will do it—describe my three "moufflon days" for the benefit of those who come after. On the first day we wandered up the mountain side and down again, and at about half-past two Jan—his real name appeared to be Stephani or Jophani; I was never quite

sure which—my "chasseur," plainly intended turning it up. There was a sickly smile on his face as he shouldered the rifle and set himself resolutely towards home. Personally rather glad than otherwise, I made just the proper show of protest and contentedly followed on his heels. The first glimpses of the home of the moufflon had not strongly attracted me. It seemed less like the haunts of a wild sheep than one huge and hilly farmyard. Not thus had I pictured this wild mountain sport, mindful no doubt of much Himalayan literature on the pursuit of Ammon or Poli, and I was continually annoyed beyond measure to find, on scanning a distant peak, a couple of cows and a pig or two, then, a little further on, some horses and a dilapidated Sard. Well, Moufflon Day No. 2 came, and it was with something like hopefulness that we started off, though I had rubbed a toe the day before and fought shy in consequence of violent exertion on the hill. After we had tramped something like a mile beside a stream, we flushed a good covey of partridge, and as these flew only a few yards, and as certain partridge would, in the then state of the larder, be very much better than uncertain moufflon, I went back for the shot-gun. When, however, we got back to the spot at which we had marked down the birds, they were nowhere to be found, and in vain we tramped round and over the ground. They were gone.

Back to the halfway house I went for lunch,

and then sallied forth refreshed on another diligent search for the partridges, but again without success. Jophani's hour, 2.30, came round again, and again he, with the same protesting and sea-sick-looking smile, intimated that his labours were over for the day, and again I fell in, not too reluctantly, with his plans.

A third day dawned, however, and on that I determined to do great things. I was up before cockcrow and ready for the road by half-past six. It may have been my fancy, but Jophani seemed to look bright and expectant, thus falling in with my own mood, and he certainly seized the rifle with a more jaunty air than on either of the previous days. Right for the tallest mountain in Sardinia, Gennargentu, we went, and by a few minutes before nine we had clambered clear of the brush and undergrowth, and Jophani suggested a search through the telescope. There, right opposite me on the hillside, was the moufflon, brown and tan, with just a streak of white in the middle, and his great curled horns waving to right and left as he nibbled and browsed and fed on, with Mrs. Moufflon and a couple of kids following about a hundred yards behind. They did not seem on very cordial terms, for she never ventured any closer to her lord and master, but kept back with the family. Of a sudden, and in spite of the discouragements of the two days previous, some of the old stalking enthusiasm of other days took hold of me, and excitedly I explained the situation to the impassive

Jophani, to whom enthusiasm of any kind was foreign. I tried to make him understand that, from the direction in which the moufflon was feeding on, it must soon cross the tops, and our business was to try and meet it. Taking note of a conspicuous cairn of stones, close by which the animal must pass, I hurried on and signed to Jophani to do the same. It took us all twenty minutes to reach that cairn, and when we reached it we found the ground terribly rocky and uneven. The brute might have been close to us or not; it was impossible to tell, and everything depended on whether, while we lost sight of it, it had moved quickly or otherwise. All we could do in the circumstances was to move very cautiously and make a minute examination of the ground before us. We had gone some distance beyond the cairn, and I was on the point of giving up the search as hopeless—that was the sort of broken ground in which any animal would be either lost to view or else disturbed altogether—when the familiar "Oip aller" of the local peasants came floating on the breeze, and an ancient mountaineer came in view, trudging along a dubious track that I had not previously noticed, and urging along a reluctant packhorse. This seemed to settle the matter, for the moufflon would assuredly have got wind of the ancient, if not of ourselves, and in any case we should not get another shot to-day. This happened, however, to be one of the loveliest days ever vouchsafed to earth: I was away up on the right

spur of the loftiest mountain in the island, and the wind blew in no settled direction, but rather all ways at once and quite gently at that. It was a day for a panorama kodak, but not for fooling with a rifle. When the ancient mountaineer had gone on his way, I gave the whole thing up and we just strolled on. Jophani took the glass, and at once said "Moufflon!"

I do not think that I rightly understood him. Three horses were grazing away on the right below us, and four cows on the left. At length, however, finding that I had always been looking too far ahead, deceived possibly by the peculiar light, I got the glass on a large flock of tame sheep and also on Mrs. Moufflon and two kids, as before. And then, in turn, Jophani showed me the male, feeding on quietly just where he should have been. My opinion of Jophani as a stalker was not high, and I am the more anxious to give him all the credit due on this occasion.

Well, I watched the moufflon feeding steadily on across little passes and burns, and then I admit I acted quite foolishly and thus spoilt the stalk. Instead of watching him right out of that broken ground and then cutting him off, as we should have done, I persuaded Jophani to slip round and follow him. The ground proved far rougher than it had looked to be from the tops, and we therefore had to go cautiously forward and peep over each little ledge and ravine in the hope of catching sight of him. In this way we lost valuable

time, whereas from our elevated position we could have seen him leave the broken ground, and we could then have made a point. As it was, how-

A TAME MOUFFLON.

ever, we simply blundered on in our cautious way, losing all the time that he was spending in travelling on, and thus we never saw him again. I do

not pretend to know the habits of the moufflon, but my offence was in this case against the elementary principles of stalking under such conditions, and I paid accordingly. Jophani may be acquainted with their habits, though I doubt his lore, but we could only communicate by signs, and such a process entails delays that are necessarily in the beast's favour.

Over three little valleys we cautiously progressed in this fashion, the exit from which must have been plainly visible from our original position, but not from the lower ground we now occupied, and at half-past one I gave the moufflon up for lost and camped beside a purling stream for lunch. Bread and veal were now consumed in silence, and I just raised my eyes from the cup that had been filled from the keg carried by Jophani in time to see—Mrs. Moufflon and the two kids about a hundred and fifty yards away on the nearest skyline. Jophani was off on a search expedition, and I restrained a natural impulse to seize the rifle and go crawling and fooling about, and sat quietly there and finished my lunch, waiting for the benighted Jophani to return. He came back at last, and I pointed out the lady and her family, evidently, though at discreet range, interested in our presence. I gathered from my friend's gesticulations that the moufflon himself must have moved further on. Should we follow? Jophani was evidently asking mutely, and with every hope of my declining any further pursuit. "By all means," I

signed back, and on that broiling afternoon we toiled straight towards the top of Gennargentu. The good chasseur was for ever suggesting a downward course, but if the moufflon were only half the bird I took him for, I felt sure that he would move up. Up therefore went we too, and terribly hot I was when we had reached the top. There was nothing in sight, except the whole of Sardinia. "Tempo?" ventured Jophani, tentatively, glancing at my waistcoat-pocket. In response I pointed sternly to 2.30 on the dial of my watch. He gave a melancholy sigh, wound an endless and dirty handkerchief around his brow, and made sounds and signs of being sick. Perhaps I was heartless, perhaps some memory of the guide mentioned in my one and only book on Sardinia came to me; but I gave him no encouragement, merely taking from him the rifle and moving quietly on. Home lay far away below us, plainly discernible through the glass; and, as I strolled down a gradual descent, a great black vulture hovered over me, some thirty or forty yards high, in so determined a fashion that I sat me down on a log and proceeded to undo the strap of the rifle cover. But that vulture was a better educated bird than I had allowed for, and no sooner was the cover loosened than he was away in increasing spiral flights, and soon became a speck in the blue heavens. One more little misadventure fittingly closed a disappointing day, for in crossing a stream swollen by the recent rains I

had to crawl along the arm of a tree placed from bank to bank, and half-way over I slipped off into the water and got wet through. How I eventually got the moufflon; how I met a friendly mountaineer who persuaded me to go on a visit to his eyrie and see the great mineral wealth of the hills; how I stayed some days with him, and how, on returning to civilisation, I learnt that a stern letter and a finger had been sent to my relatives at home, and how the whole of the Gordon property had to be mortgaged to pay the brigands £25,000—when the old villain admitted, on taking affectionate leave of me, that he would have handed me over for 25 lire—all this will be told in a later book which I have in contemplation, and which, however successful it may be in commanding the indulgence of strangers, will be received with no satisfaction whatever by my own family.

V

IN PRAISE OF SALMON FISHING

It is perhaps safe to assume that rivers have flowed, though not necessarily as they flow now, since the world settled down to its present physical respectability; but who shall say how long salmon have been running up them or how long men have been trying to catch the salmon? It is a curious but undeniable fact that very little more than thirty years have elapsed since men first knew the real art of angling for salmon. Think of it!

A step back in the unrelenting march of time, and I see myself once more a lad handling the heavy poles, coarse gut, thick lines, and rude, clumsy flies of the period. It is often alleged, not without good reason, that man is too quickly exterminating the beasts, birds, and fishes that give him sport or food, and, seeing how essential to success is a knowledge of the habits of the animals of the chase, it is almost wonderful that he should have taken so long to learn so little.

It is also a little remarkable that the fish should

WADING.

in comparatively short time have been educated to rise at "flies," the like of which never flew, the size of which never grew. If only I could put the clock back five-and-twenty years and know of salmon fishing what I know to-day, twenty fish a day instead of a paltry six or eight would have been grassed on the banks of silvery Dee in that May month, 1874!

About that period a certain noble lord had succeeded in persuading the House of Commons that the property our forefathers had fought and died to keep intact was a mere asset of personal trash that two spendthrifts might sell to share the profit. This admirably suited many landowners, and one of these was always busy driving round the estate and, as he said, "rearranging" it—a convenient term for parcelling it into lots, on which to obtain advances from the Bank of Jerusalem.

Day after day he used to drop my sister and myself at a point where the road ran near the river, some eight miles west of home, and we had to get back to the roadside by six in the evening to meet him, so as to reach the house in time to dress for dinner. Now, every one who knows anything of salmon fishing knows that the very best time in May is after six in the evening. The best hours, then, were denied us; often, indeed, we had to be satisfied with a few hours' fishing in the middle of the day. Yet, even then, what sport we had!

Once off the waggonette, away we would speed

to one or other of our favourite pools below the bank beside the road. My sister, G., had two special pools, either of which could be fished without the need of wading. They lay a mile apart. We had neither gaff nor gillie; it was a matter of tiring the fish out, handling him at the finish, then tailing him out on to the bank. In explanation of this somewhat mysterious formula, I ought to say that a dead-beat salmon can (if he *is* dead-beat) be led out on to the stones, and one hand can then be slipped round the tail, the fork of which gives a good hold. This is the mode of dealing with comparatively small fish in comparatively shallow water. With a heavy fish in deep water such paltry traffic avails not. Him you must warily coax out of the pool and down the river on the chance of finding shingle below. This is, to be sure, a trying and a difficult job. From the moment at which he begins to tire, a fish is unwilling to leave the security of the pool, for he knows all about the tumbling rapids, and little does he relish being jarred on the turbulent shallows. Even if the angler should succeed in pulling him into them, the trouble is only begun, for nothing can then stay him until the next pool is reached. The performance usually proceeds somewhat in this fashion. With head kept determinedly up-stream, the fish allows the water to carry it down. The angler, on his side, keeps as light a strain as possible on the gear, grovels and slips round bushes and over boulders, and makes

up as much as he can of the yards of line that slip off the reel at each check, whenever a bit of smooth going gives him the opportunity for such retrenchment. The end comes swiftly in face of a combination of water too deep for wading and an extra big tree or bush growing close down to the edge. That fish at any rate will never come back, and the disgusted angler then experiences the hopeless sensation when, with a long-drawn screech, the line grows less and less on the reel. It is human to hang on, but it is also foolish, for the line may be rotten close to the reel or it may even be insecurely fastened to it. If the break comes there the fisherman will find himself far from home with a rod, a reel, a choice collection of flies and casts, but no line. If, on the other hand, he had let the fish break away with only the gut, his operations need not have been suspended for the day.

Of all extraordinary methods of recovering a fish, that which I recollect on the Galway river always struck me as the most remarkable. There, whenever a fish was hooked and made off down stream between the arches of the bridge, the gillie would pull out a pocket knife and hand it to you with a quick, "Cut when he runs you out!" Armed with a long-handled gaff, he would next dash for the bridge, stoop over the parapet at the far side, and catch the line on the gaff hook. When you had cut the line and informed him of the fact, he would haul in quickly, jump over the

parapet at the side, and then run down the bank and handline the fish if still on. I remember once saving a fish that way, but it is ticklish work.

From this digression, let me, without apology, return to our childhood's fishing memories. As already stated, G. and I had to land our own fish. When we left the waggonette each morning, she put up her rod, I got into my waders, and our ways lay apart, an arrangement being come to with reference to meeting at a given spot in time to catch the waggonette on its homeward journey.

Well I remember reaching her second pool many a time with the usual question.

"Three I've got," might be the reply, "but I've just lost a beauty. The line got caught round a stone just as I was getting him in, and then he made a bit of a rush out and snap went the gut. You?" I had got four, but it took such a deuce of a time landing them that all the day went in playing the fish and carrying them.

Day after day we would be back at the roadside at the appointed time with our six or seven fish. And the number we lost!

One tragedy of the kind is deeply graven in memory's tables. I had caught four fish, and was bound for the lowest pool, where I had arranged to meet my sister at half-past five. Above this pool there is nearly a quarter of a mile of broken water, no place for a fish to rest in, and right in the middle of this water I saw an unmistakable eddy behind a big blue stone. Then a fish rose

and twirled through the water, just like the spin of a spoon bait.

Now, when a fish flops up and down in a pool, it is my firm believe that he never at that moment rises to the fly. At any rate, I never remember rising a solitary splashing fish, but have always considered that the sharp swirling rise and twist meant a running fish. It is by no means a common rise to see, and you will probably see hundreds of "floppers" before you come across one twister. When, however, you do chance to see the latter, remember he will rise.

This fellow was in all probability resting here on his way up, and I determined to try him. Slipping the bag from my shoulders, I got as far out in the river as I dared, and fished down, foot by foot. I had just come to the conclusion that I must have gone over him and that he would not look at me, when there was a boiling in the water, a jerk-jerk of the top joint, and I had him fast. Fishing in this solitary way, with no one to shout to for assistance, has its own peculiar sensations. Given luck, it may be the most delightful fishing of all; but there are times when the isolation is the reverse of splendid. Of course it is open to the lonely angler to wander home at the end of the day and tell lies about every fish lost, but this gives very little satisfaction after the freshness has worn off. This falsification is rather common among anglers, and my gillie once hit the nail plumb-centre when, in response to a question as

to the reason for all the bigger fish being killed further up the river, he said drily—

"It's mebbe they're bigger leers up the watter!"

Well, as my fish steadied himself just a moment or two in the eddy, I took advantage of the truce to feel my way cautiously out of the deep water and back to the bank. It is always advisable, in view of any emergency, when you are wading deep and have hooked a fish, to get back to the side as quickly as possible. The water is the salmon's element, not the angler's, and the latter fights at a disadvantage when immersed to the waist. I noticed, even in this early stage of our contest, an ominous twitching about the fish that certainly boded mischief. The rod I held high, with the lightest possible strain, and thus awaited developments. They were not long coming. With a few sharp dashes he was away across the river, the line tearing through the water like a knife blade. Full twenty yards ahead of the spot where the line entered the water, a quivering gleam of silver leapt clear of the stream. It was my fish—mine for the moment anyway—I knew it by the play on the rod. So remarkably as a rule does a swift-running stream "belly" the line as to make even the practised angler doubt the identity of a leaping fish and the one on his own hook. All that he can do in such trying circumstances is to keep the rod held high and with no strain on beyond that of the weight of water. This alone is tremendous. Gallantly my fish fought, but the rushing water

did not let him draw breath, and at last I had him properly beat. Throwing the rod right back and laying it on the bank, so that the reel would run if he made a last rush, I took the line in my left hand and steadily drew him in. His head came sliding over the pebbles; my hand was round his tail; I had him, still well hooked, on the bank. I could easily have thrown myself on him and secured him again. Like a fool, I let him kick and slip out of my hands. Now, a salmon is a slippery creature when it takes a fit of kicking and plunging, and in less time than it takes in the telling he was on the edge of the river. Next moment he was into it. Why I continued blind to the danger, goodness alone knows; but, somehow, there seemed no risk of the hold giving, and even if he did contrive to run out a few yards of line, I thought that I should easily be able to haul him in again. So much for my reasoning. It brought its own reward, for a moment later, evidently revived by his visit to dry land, away he went, and the line, running one moment freely through my thumb and finger, was floating limp the next, and the fish gone. A loop had caught round my leg, and the gut parted. A Commissioner of Oaths might have made a handsome fee during the next few moments, and I pushed on disconsolate to the trysting place, to find that G. had two fish: but, between us, we should have had seven.

What primitive fishing was that of forty years

ago compared with that of to-day! All those days we were just fishing like fools, and so, for the matter of that, was the rest of the angling world. We caught fish, true, like other people, but the tackle was all wrong. A fly called the Redwing and dressed on an inch-and-a-half hook, took most of them, but if we caught so many, it was no doubt because the pools were crowded. Yet, as the sun gained power and the day grew warm, the salmon used to rise to the natural fly (the March Brown among others), and if we had but used light casting lines and fished with small double-hook imitations of March Browns, we should without a doubt have been into fish the whole time the rise lasted. There was no flop on these occasions. A snout would appear and disappear and reappear, with an occasional swish of anxiety lest a specially tempting morsel should escape. Surely so many salmon have never since congregated in those upper reaches of the Dee as did in that year. The lesson taught me by that season, when I saw the salmon feeding naturally, was to start artificial March Browns, and the best sport of my life has been the result. Yet never since have I had the luck to fish pools so teeming with salmon.

But I forgot. The salmon does not feed in fresh water. So, with some later qualification of their verdict, say the scientific gentlemen in the employ of the Scotch Fishery Board. With what these painstaking gentlemen prove I am in no way concerned. It is enough for me to feel convinced

that salmon do feed in fresh water, and to know moreover that they will have some March Browns in preference to others, rejecting the latter unconditionally. When they take a bunch of worms, you have to give them time to swallow before you strike. The fact of finding nothing in the salmon's stomach when it is opened and examined proves nothing beyond the instinct and power that most fish have to throw up their last meal when caught. I have known salmon throw the fatal minnow yards up the line, and pike will notoriously do the same. There is a millionaire of my acquaintance who never has a shilling in his pocket. But a secretary walks behind writing cheques, and that keeps up the supply of men, and women, who touch their hats to the principal. Well, I would as soon call him a pauper as admit that the salmon never feeds in our rivers!

The beautiful and sporting stretch of Dee water that I mentioned above had been let to a Lord Arbuthnot. It was again offered to him in the early seventies, at an annual rental of fifteen pounds, but he refused it on the ground that the rent was too high! Diana, Goddess of the Chase! Surely, in the wooded hills of Algidus you had no sport to compare with this; surely, the calm surface of the Lake of Nemi hid no fish that fought like those in the limpid waters of the Dee!

The "wild fish" is a chaste problem that beats nine anglers out of every ten, and by "wild fish"

I mean one that seizes your fly or bait and is off. Whiz! goes the line, as you wade and stumble towards the shore; suddenly it slackens, and you wind for all you are worth. Is he gone? No, for here he is right under your feet. The rod tightens again. This time he is away up-stream, up through the rushing waters that form the pool above, then into the pool itself. You clamber out and run up the bank. On he goes; still on. Now he turns, again too quick for you to keep the strain on. You wheel all you can. He is still on, for you feel him just a moment. Then back he goes through the boiling waters and into the pool in which you first hooked him, and down lower still with a rush and jump. A hundred yards of line are off the reel now. He is out of the pool and down the shallows into the pool below. You get there breathless and begin to wind, but you hardly feel him when you see the slack line tearing through the water. He is running up again, and, do what you will, you cannot get the slack up. He is by now somewhere close to the spot at which you first hooked him. Last of all comes a wild rush, and you feel the line float down, for the fish has fouled it round about a stone and is free. Well, that is a wild fish, and he usually gives rise to wild language. On a very few occasions I have killed them, but as a rule they beat me.

While on salmon memories, I may as well recall the death of the largest fish, 46 lbs., that I ever killed. This was on the Dee, at Coulter, in the big

pool just below the railway station. I hooked him about a third of the way down, and after a few preliminary trials, so to speak, he went straight up the river into the heavy water at the neck of the pool. The river was high at the time, and the whole force of the Dee came down under the south bank. on which I was fishing. In such water, right under my nose, the brute sulked, but I was using very strong tackle on the strength of the water being much discoloured, so I simply turned the point of the rod down stream and gave the gentleman the butt. Minutes passed without a sign, and I was beginning to think that the fish must have surreptitiously fouled me and made off. Three or four times, in fact, I was on the point of breaking, deeming it impossible that any fish could stay motionless in such water. At last, however, I felt a quiver, and knew that the fish must still be there. My landing him was a matter of luck. It would probably have been an impossibility from this deep side of the river, but a ferry boat happened to ply two or three hundred yards further down, and by good luck I managed to hail the ferryman. He soon put me on the opposite bank, playing the fish all the while, and it was in quite shallow water that I gradually tired my salmon out. It is of course always easier to kill a fish on the shallow than on the deep side of a pool, for the shallow water is all against his favourite tactics of sheering away when he gets to uncomfortably close quarters. That fish took an hour and three-quarters in the killing.

A more beautiful fish, however, that fell to my rod from the same river weighed close on 30 lbs. with the sea-lice on it, and I killed it on the 3rd of September, rather an odd season of the year for those waters, up which clean fish rarely run until the last days of September, and then only after a heavy flood. Gone is the pool and gone the bank I stood on, for the south bank of the Lummels pool, with the land we fished from in the old days, has long been washed into the river. So little on the occasion in question did I anticipate getting a fish that I did not even take the trouble to change the fly, and left on the cast a great 2½-inch Whitewing. This, by the way, was done after a half-hearted attempt to remove it, for I had fished with it the night previous, and the knot was so tight that I should have been compelled to break the gut. As, moreover, it seemed little more than a farce to fish at all, I thought that any fly would do. I was always fishing in those primitive days, for there were given unto me many elder brothers who obligingly shot the grouse.

Three or four days earlier there had been heavy rain, and the river had come down in some sort of a spate. Half-way down the pool my thirty-pounder came at me with as fine a rise as angler could wish, and for just an hour and a half he fought like a demon. My gillie, Willie Coutts, was a novice at salmon fishing, a sport that he at first viewed with contempt, and had never gaffed a fish in his life. At the finish, therefore, I handed

him the rod with much cautious instruction and maxim, reached as far as I could with my long old cane gaff, and snatched the fish as he passed, still full of running, swiftly up stream. At the moment of my lifting him clear of the water, the hook came away, and it was then evident that he had been foul-hooked in the hard scale of the cheek. The hook had then worn a narrow wound fully two inches long, and, though the hold was tough, it only needed one more wriggle, half a shake, or a slack line, for the prettiest fish that ever reluctantly left the Dee to have remained in it. Mr. Rolfe, the greatest British fish-artist of our times, saw the fish and was so impressed with its beauty that he begged me to have a cast taken of it and promised to paint it for me. This he did, and a photograph of it appears at the end of the chapter.

In my reminiscences of fights with salmon, I have said little of the minnow, though I do not pretend not to have used it on days when the fly was impossible. Ever since Mr. Digby Cayley introduced his wonderful style of minnow fishing on the Dee—his prodigious takes at Ballater will always live in the memory of those who saw them —there have, of course, been minnow days and, no doubt, even worm days. Latterly, however, Dee salmon have shown a reluctance to be fooled with this kind of bait, and it has been fly or nothing.

Nor, I see, have I mentioned a favourite old plan that has often got me sport, and that is the use of two March Browns of different size, the

smaller being used on the bob. Into the niceties of throwing the fly I have not thought it necessary to enter, as this humble chronicle of some hours of a misspent life does not pretend to the dignity of a sportsman's instructor. I should, however, like in passing to caution the beginner against a too prevalent superstition among indifferent fisher of salmon, and that is that the main object to strive for is the throwing of a "record" line. Tournaments and competitions are well enough in their place, but their place is not where salmon are rising. There is far too great a tendency nowadays to cast immense lengths of line, with the inevitable result, unless very great skill be brought into play, that, instead of the fly being last to alight on the water, fly and line alight simultaneously and all of a heap.

I had almost forgotten my fight with the real and original pond serpent. The late Colonel Tryon, of Bulwick, had a pond—the local habit would have been to call the thing a "locghchh," on the blessed chance of the pronunciation dislocating the stranger's neck—at Harringworth, hard by the Seaton viaduct—in which people rarely fished, though rumour had it that fabulous monsters made merry in its weedy depths. Indeed, Mr. Wright, the banker at Uppingham, showed a specimen pike of close on 30 lbs., which he had taken from the pond in question. I do not, I regret to admit, recollect having obtained permission to fish there; I recollect fishing. I took

with me not only such strong tackle as seemed suitable, with a hundred and fifty yards of strong, common salmon line on the reel, a large float and a gimp hook baited with a live roach, but also a ladder, which I intended laying across the rushes that fringed the margin, so as to get well over the deepest part of the water. Suddenly and without warning a great tail was lifted above the surface, and the float went under. I clutched the heavy salmon rod; the float came up and tarried a moment at the surface; then it went off again. I struck. Evidently this was the sea-serpent, and he was growing tired of fresh water. He simply steered straight for the centre of the loch, and there he must have known of a hole communicating with other worlds. There was nothing in reason to break on my side of the show, and I held on for all I was worth. But he never stayed. The line ran out and came to an end. Something went, and I wheeled up. The gimp hook had less bend in it than when I launched it on the venture, and on its point was a fragment of white gristle. The sea serpent had left his card.

THE THIRTY-POUND SALMON.

IN THE BUTTS.

VI

GROUSE DRIVING

Of all the pleasant forms of sport with the shot-gun, none surely beats that of grouse-driving. Some there are who rave about tall pheasants, while others have much praise for the driven partridge, but the surroundings are never the same, and half the delight of sport lies in its surroundings. Pheasants are, after all, fed and petted for fifty-one weeks of the year that they may be

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Drawn by Archibald Thorburn

Red Grouse.

slaughtered, scientifically enough by the few, but very barbarously and wastefully by the many, during the fifty-second. Partridges give good shooting enough over a high belt of trees, but this condition is rarely fulfilled, and the birds have a domesticated look in harmony with the obvious fact of their sheltering in Farmer Hobbs's turnips or the village schoolmaster's potatoes. How different is the grouse, the wild bird of the moors and mountains, living amid the gorgeous heather on the steep sides of high hills where the only sounds are the soothing patter of a babbling burn and the occasional bleat of a black-faced sheep. Never do I see a patch of heather in the south of England, but it turns my thoughts to the crisp breezes of the North and to the whir of the grouse as he flashes past the butt. Like an arrow in any case, he is almost invisible with a strong wind behind him, and quick indeed must be the hand and eye that come into quick play to drop the passing bird bouncing on the heather. The singletons are the easiest bagged. The confusion is when a pack rises on the far sky-line, then vanishes for some moments in the purple gloom, while there comes borne on the breeze the faint "Mark over!" of the approaching beaters. See! the birds are coming straight for you: a hundred thousand forms seem to float in the air with motionless wings. You pick out one which seems first; no, there are others before him. You change your mind and your bird. Bang! . . . missed him. Bang! . . . missed again.

"Quick, Henry, the other gun." Revenge! you will brown the lot . . . bang! bang! not a feather is ruffled, and the whole pack skims away to the glen behind. Through your mind there goes a quick resolve to give your guns to your man and bid him throw them in the loch. Yet that was unusual bad luck. It was taking your eye off the bird first selected, merely because another caught your fancy rather in front of him. That was the first false step, and all the misfortune resulted from it.

Grouse shooting is, in my opinion, a matter almost entirely of "time." You must not snap, and you must not follow; you must *meet* the bird with the gun in a quiet sort of way. I do not believe this to be matter for explanation on paper, nor do I believe that a man knows why he shoots sometimes so much better than at others. I can only say, in support of this view, that for two or three years I went right off my shooting and could not hit even a flopping pheasant. Doubtless I was pulling the gun off yards in front. All of a sudden, when I had been seriously thinking of selling my guns and never firing another cartridge, I went North one Twelfth to shoot over the moors of an old friend and relative, and there I found myself shooting better than I had ever shot in my life. For this welcome change I cannot account, except by the belief that I took slightly more time —not more perhaps than a hundredth of a second's difference—and raised my gun quietly to the first

shot instead of jerking it. I had, in fact, long suspected myself of snapping, and was determined to take more time, but bad habits are more easily acquired than corrected. I have quoted my own case, not because I find it particularly interesting, but because it seemed to illustrate the difficulty.

What a glorious sensation it is to step from the dogcart and take up the gun that has lain by so long in dismal silence while a London season has been flirting and fluttering the days away! Before you stretch the long chain of hills and the pleasant glens, while your heart beats anxiously and you tell yourself again and again that you wish you had refused that last whisky up at the house, and that you do not feel like hitting anything. After all, there is no great shame in missing, for the man who can shoot driven grouse can shoot anything. Many men would shoot them admirably, if the birds would only give them a little more time, for there are those who shoot pheasants well and are yet very deliberate in their movements. Some men are particularly slow on their feet, and swing so slowly, indeed, as to get in only one barrel when they should get in two. Distance, again, is a most important thing, and it is a matter solely for the shooter's correct judgment, which should tell him (but generally does not) exactly when the bird is in shot or not. I use the word "distance" quite generally, for no one in the butt stops to ask himself whether a given bird

is so many yards distant. Last September I saw a grouse dropped dead at fifty-three yards; the bird was crossing at right angles to the gun, behind the butts and at the end of a drive. No doubt far longer shots than this have been recorded in the

A GOOD RETRIEVER.

Field and elsewhere. These bare records of distance, however, have to be read with local knowledge to convey much impression of the truth. Thus, I recollect the *Field* recording the case of a Brighton golfer driving a ball some four hundred

yards right into the hole! Now, I read the *Field* and I know the gentleman in question. What the correspondent of that admirable journal forgot to mention was that a hundred and fifty yards from the tee the ball had to run down a steep hill to the green. Such detail might to the artistic eye diminish the picturesqueness of the record, but good golfers love the truth, however bare. In the same way, a high bird flying before a strong wind might quite conceivably be shot dead and carried a good half-mile before finally coming to rest. I believe, then, that in this rapid and accurate judgment of distance, in which, of course, must be included the allowance for pace, lies the secret of the individual shooter's ability. That the proper study of mankind is man is as correct in the grouse butt as on the Stock Exchange. Some men can kill at twenty yards, are doubtful at twenty-two yards, and useless at thirty yards; others, in the minority, can kill at thirty yards, are doubtful at thirty-five yards, and useless at forty yards, and there are a dozen grades between these limits. The great thing is for each one to know his own limitations and to respect them. Otherwise, the birds will live to grow old. This self-analysis becomes instinctive, and there is, as I said above, no precise measuring in yards. Any really good shot could stand at the foot of a brick tower and indicate exactly the brick that marks the extreme height at which he would be morally sure of an overhead pheasant.

After one has shot driven grouse for a fortnight, it is curious how absurdly easy any other kind of shooting seems. Personally, I think the grouse far harder than the partridge, though I am aware that the majority of sportsmen who know both hold the opposite opinion. He comes at a butt that only partially conceals you, and that does not hide your head, which is the portion of the human anatomy most hated and dreaded by wild creatures. Like the ostrich of the proverb (though not, I believe, of the desert), men think that because, crouched in their grouse-butts, they drop their eyes so as not to see over the edge, they are themselves unseen, altogether forgetting the half foot of bald-headed viciousness that sticks aloft under some weird hat. This, however, the grouse sees from half a mile away, and he swerves —Gemini! how he can swerve when so minded!— making the shot doubly hard.

Light, again, is all important in grouse driving: one day the sun is in your eyes; the next, perhaps, there is a drenching mist; a third will give that terribly trying glare after rain showers. The variety is infinite, and it is difficult to name the worst sample. The very worst light, perhaps, that I have personally experienced was on the last occasion I was out grouse-shooting. It was at the time of the visit of the Crown Prince of Germany to Lowther Castle, and they kindly asked me to join the party. It was a perfect day, with no wind and not too much sun, such a day as one rarely

enjoys on the Fells. When I complained of the light, Mr. Lancelot Lowther murmured something about Château Lafitte; but every one else com-

THE CROWN PRINCE AT LOWTHER.

plained of the light too, and they had not all been drinking of that vintage. Whether it was that the drive was extremely long and the further ridge half a mile away and under a strong light,

I know not, but anyhow I had to tell my loader to look out and tell me when birds were coming, while I gazed steadily on the floor of my butt to accustom my eyes to the gloom. The Prince shot with 20-bore guns, a great handicap, as I ventured to impress upon him at the time, but he shot his birds in the air remarkably well and clean. Birds that skimmed between the butts he let pass before firing, making the shot doubly difficult, and often letting them get too far before taking them. He is a young man yet and will one of these days shoot brilliantly, and some one has rightly taught him the necessity of caution. My own plan has always been to study the lay of the butts, and to take a tuft of heather, a prominent stone, or even a distant tree, and make a mental resolve of taking birds thus far and no farther; then begin again after the birds have passed the next stand. The Prince merely erred on the side of extreme caution. Would that others were like him, for more accidents happen in grouse driving than in any other form of shooting in this country. The birds come on; the shooter swings round, losing sight of the other butts, and the next sportsman gets the charge in his ear, and thanks his guardian angel that it did not find his eyes instead. This casualty as often as not results from the fatal practice of trying to get two barrels in before cross-skimming birds get across the line. The only way to do this is to take the first with a very long shot, and to get very quickly on to

the second. But if he follows—and the instinct, mind, is to follow—some one's eyes will be in danger. On three distinct occasions I have saved

THE CROWN PRINCE IN HIS BUTT.

myself such accidents by watching my neighbour and ducking at the right moment. It is not dignified; it may not even be sport; but it is better than wandering blind about the world. On

each occasion this was through the man in the next butt getting in the second barrel before the birds crossed the line. Once, when I bobbed, one pellet went through the top of my cap and grazed my scalp. I should have had the whole charge if I had stood upright, and, as it was, my loader got quite enough of it. Whenever I see a man following, I am not shooting until he is done. On another occasion we were at partridges; fortunately I had a thick coat on, and had just time to turn and receive a perfect hail of shot, and here too my loader had one just below the eye. The strange thing is that I have seen really good shots shoot people in this way, so often indeed that I have been quite nervous about my own shooting, though luckily, so far, without cause.

I do, however, remember getting into terrible trouble as a boy for shooting a setter, but this was an extraordinary case, for the bird rose to a point many yards above the setter. There I killed it, but one single pellet dropped immediately down and lodged in the dog's neck. When you are young, people are always ready to put you in the wrong; for all that, it was not my fault, and had my dearest and best been standing where the setter was, I should have fired the same shot without any anxiety.

There is in all probability no finer all-round game shot in the whole world than Lord de Grey. Without desiring, even were that possible, to detract in any way from his extraordinary prowess

with the gun, I would merely remark that no other man on earth has his practice or scope. Lord de Grey is naturally extremely quick; his loaders are remarkably trained; and he himself works with the accuracy of a clock. Without being quite certain whether or not this is the case, I fancy his guns are handed to him cocked. I am, at any rate, quite sure that if I had shooting of my own and a reliable loader, I should, when driving, always have my guns handed to me full cock, because, early in the season at least, the birds come in coveys, and you cannot, even in these days of hammerless guns, get in more than two barrels if you have to cock the second gun yourself. It might be thought that the mere action of pressing the bolt forward is so instantaneous as to make no practical difference; but it occupies some fraction of a second, and it must be reckoned with as a motion to be gone through before you commence putting the gun to your shoulder. Those who demur to such extremely fine subdivision of seconds have surely never seen driven grouse come past them on a high wind. Only once do I remember having killed four birds, and four only, which were coming to me. They were in line, a little wide one of the other, but not one straggling behind.

This was when four of us had taken a small shooting together half way between Peterhead and Aberdeen. Four of us! Two are dead, and the third I never see any more. I had a very smart

body servant in those days, who is since gone to the bad; and, by the way, as most of my friends and relations think that I have done the same, that accounts for the party! Anyhow, he used to hand me my second gun at full cock when we were driving grouse. Those were the early days of the hammerless gun. I got my four birds, two with the first gun in front and the other two with the second gun behind, and I am quite convinced that I should not have done it if I had had to go through any motion of cocking. Given a sufficiently good loader, I do not think the practice so dangerous as at first sight it looks. When birds are coming, he holds the second gun below the triggers in the right hand pointed well away. You pass him the first in a similar position. This is where you hold the gun for firing, and you take the second with your left above the trigger-guard (also where you hold it for firing), your only remaining motion being to bring the right hand up to the triggers. All the same, I have never since had the second gun handed to me at full cock, for never since have I had as personal servant a trained loader.

VII

ON PIGEON SHOOTING AND GLOVE FIGHTS

Now, I want to say just a word about the "sport" of pigeon shooting, but I wish first to say that I do not write against it without any knowledge of its peculiarities. I have shot pigeons in my time; I once even shot my old friend, Mr. C., of the S. P. business—he had just won the Grand Prix at Monte Carlo—a hundred birds each for £250 a side at Hendon. And the boys were betting too! I felt that I held him from the first, but I only just won, and he was full of both money and confidence, a combination that goes a long way towards making a man shoot well. The reader may, therefore, please to regard me as a reformed rake, or what he will, but let him at any rate credit me with some knowledge of that which I write of. There are so many current criticisms of sport from writers who could scarcely lay claim to as much that I venture this preface to an unequivocal condemnation of the practice

of trap shooting. It is a kind of living roulette, as cruel a gamble every bit. It does no good to any one; it is not practice for any more useful kind of shooting, for trap-shooting is a thing apart, and its few masters are by no means equally masters of other feats with the gun. The birds are neither fairly treated nor properly shot. The pigeon is often tortured before the trap is pulled, and in nineteen cases out of twenty the only place to shoot at is the tail. Birds coming over in everyday shooting are after all hit in the head and neck and killed clean, but the poor pigeons are only wounded, and go hopping about the place until a cur dog retrieves them and the sportsmen settle over the shot. It is not good healthy sport. It is not, as I have already said, practice for other shooting. It is catchwork, trickery, a mere question of timing. You walk up to your pegged-out distance; you say to the man at the trap, "Are you ready?" he replies, "Yes," and you say, "Pull!" At the same moment you notice a trap going over and put up your gun. There is a glimpse of the bird; bang! bang! go the barrels. Why, many of the best pigeon shots hardly ever see the bird at all! Poor old David Hope Johnstone, who was unrivalled in his day, told me that he used to put a piece of white paper three yards beyond each trap and practice at it, having the traps pulled without birds in. And then, as the traps fell, he shot at the paper! Now, what I want to know is, what is the use of

such trick shooting to any one who aims at proficiency with driven partridges or rocketting pheasants, in both of which cases you have to take your bird a certain distance in front? In pigeon shooting, on the other hand, you have to shoot so much behind. The odds against the pigeons grow more and more. In the eighties, I remember well, a price of three to one on the gun killing the bird used ultimately to defeat the layer, whereas in the late nineties, five and six to one on the gun was frequently laid on good shots. The improvement has been in the weapon rather than in the man. And even in this trick shooting the Americans are far ahead of us, for we probably never produced a shot to equal Dr. Carver. The finest all-round natural shot in our islands is, of course, Lord de Grey, and an excellent pigeon shot he was too until they handicapped him out of it, placing him so far from the traps that his shot, which rarely if ever missed, could not stop the bird. He had, therefore, no option but to retire. This handicapping is the worst of pigeon-shooting, and in harmony with the gambling spirit that pervades it. It also entails far more suffering on the birds, which, instead of being killed dead, flutter away full of lead pellets, and die slowly in pain. A bad shot does infinitely more harm in this way than a good one, for the latter will always know instinctively when a hare or pheasant or pigeon is within killing range. If not, he holds his shot, but the duffer will always blaze, with

the result that pheasants run about without tails, and hares with dangling legs, and if the retrievers miss them, foxes will be busy later on. I am not, of course, dogmatically asserting that pigeon shooting does not want skill, and plenty of it, of a sort, for the second shot particularly, when the first barrel has missed, is invariably a game shot, with the need of taking into account angles and the twist of the bird. What I do mean, however, is that, whereas a good game shot can almost instantly hold his own with pigeons out of traps, a good trap-shooter need never necessarily develop into a good game shot.

"Inanimate bird shooting" was the outcome of humanitarian and other criticisms of trap-shooting, and should there be room for an "if" in the question of the latter being "time and trick" work, there can, I imagine, be no possible doubt about the former being so. Personally, I should consider nothing so detrimental to a beginner's shooting as constant practice at these "clay pigeons," for the simple reason that the clay saucer shot from its spring trap acts from first to last quite differently from any living creature. It leaves the trap at an initial velocity that nothing in nature can attain to; it rises to a certain altitude, its pace slackening at every yard ; and it finally falls limp upon the grass. In nature the operation is reversed. A bird or beast scared from its haunts starts slowly, and gradually, under the influence of terror and despair, gets the full speed

of its wings or feet. Whereas the clay pigeon pursues the even, monotonous tenour of its way, the living animal instinctively twists and turns to avoid being hit. Therefore the practised clay-pigeon-shot carefully waits until the saucer fashioned from the dust of his forefathers is once more descending to earth, and then pulls.

If this sort of trick shooting is wanted, let us at least have the best of it. I remember, in my boyhood, a farmer, one Corrie Chambers, who lived next to our home. Those were the old days of muzzle loaders, and yet I look back upon him as one of the finest shots I ever knew. Incidentally I may mention that he had a spaniel dog that brought up two broods of chickens, which used to nestle behind its ears and under its paws, and follow it into the kitchen as closely as they would have followed Mother Hen—but that is another story. Well, that farmer would back himself to hit a stone, thrown from somewhere close to him, four times out of five, and, after seeing him, I would back him too. We used whitish stones of fair weight for throwing, and the pellets marked them plainly when hit. He would also blow pennies out of sight, or drill holes through them, the latter trick being performed by having only one, or at most two pellets in the gun, tossing the penny flat-ways in the air, and shooting it as it descended. On one occasion he got sixty rabbits in one stand at Chamber's Dole—whether called after him or his father I know not, but there it

was, and there, for the matter of that, it is still—where the covert is very thick, and the rabbits never cared about facing the rides. Mr. Chambers, however, perched up in a tree, from which situation he was able to look down and get a capital view of the little beasts skipping around. A woodcock, or a low-flying pheasant might possibly have caused him uneasiness, but the neighbouring guns knew exactly where he was, and there were no accidents. My memories of his wonderful shooting prompt me to wonder whether it would be possible to hit a driven golf ball, standing, for instance, on the tee in line with the player. A hard-driven golf ball will cover fifty yards in marvellously short time, and this might be worth trying. Personally, I dare not carry a gun when golfing for fear that my adversary's life might not be properly insured.

From pigeon shooting I turn, not quite inappropriately perhaps, to another "sport" that waned and flourished and flourished and waned during the closing years of the nineteenth century, the "noble art" of boxing. In the old days men fought with their naked fists, and although they punished one another severely at times, it is common knowledge that fatal results were very uncommon. The good kind Law, which makes the grass grow and keeps everything and everybody right, stepped in and forbade this fighting with bare fists. Whereat wicked man, whose chief delight lies in evading the good kind Law, introduced a fresh form of boxing,

the glove fight. It is this Law and its evasion that we have to thank for our comfortable Clubs, for no sooner had the Publican received the injunction, "Sinner, close your bar at 10.30 and for the greater part of Sundays," than the men who made the laws (for the workers, who might be expected to be as thirsty as the men who do nothing) took to themselves spacious houses and formed Clubs, where the Early Closing Act might not apply, and there they sat and drank whisky and played cards until it was time for the Courts to open on the following day. Then they washed themselves a trifle and attended the Courts, and made fresh laws and slept awhile. So saith the Chronicler.

Well, the supporters of boxing found a peculiarly easy and ingenious way of evading the Law, for they put padded gloves on the hands of the combatants and persuaded the Law that men could not hurt one another with padded gloves on their hands. And then they merrily started killing one another. This chiefly arose through alteration of the old rules of the Prize Ring, and the arrangement that men should fight rounds, each lasting three minutes. The ordinary interval between each round is one minute, but if either of the combatants is knocked down and fails to rise within ten seconds he is counted "out." The gloves are none too thick or soft, and, as I said before, the latter day fights have had a far greater proportion of fatal endings. Bare knuckles were nothing to these thin gloves. In the old

days of the Prize Ring a man could always go down after being hit, and it has surely been conclusively proved that modern boxing under the Queensberry rules is a far more cruel pastime than a fight in the old style.

Here again, I cannot profess to criticise this "sport," particularly from the spectacular point of view, with the discriminating ignorance of those who have held aloof from its fascinations, for I have witnessed many a fight. In the last that I ever watched, one of the principals, Bill Smith, of America, was killed by a knock-out blow from his opponent, Jack Roberts, of England. (The name of the deceased, by the way, was not Smith, and he was buried in the Jewish cemetery, but no matter.) Of course, the Law took the case up—it had no option for once—and gravely inquired whether the Yankee's death was an accident or the result of a fight. In the former case, the Law would be powerless to intervene (it did not greatly want to); in the latter, every one associated with the contest would be guilty of manslaughter. Counsel for the prosecution endeavoured all he knew to prove that this boxing bout was a fight pure and simple; counsel for the defence went for all he was worth on the more convenient accident theory, and in the end the accident theory won the day. Well, what is a fight? These two men were matched, if I remember right, to fight fourteen rounds, and not one of those who gathered round the ring to watch them ever imagined for a

moment that they would get through those fourteen rounds before one or other of them was knocked out. Counsel for the defence ingenuously suggested that the judging went by points. Points, indeed! Now, on points, Smith had all the best of it. Time after time he got in and away again, but he was only hitting a piece of animated india-rubber. I must confess, though long acquaintance with such sights has not left me any admiration for them, that the manner in which Roberts took his punishment was simply extraordinary. At last, however, his time came—in the seventh round, I think—and a swinging blow on the jaw, as it would be called in the elegant reports of such a feat, sent the American to the boards. I do not for one moment assert that it was the blow that did the mischief. Such an expression of opinion would be as cruel as it is uncalled for. Besides, the Law said it was the boards; and let the matter rest there. All the same, if the men were not fighting, then I maintain that Smith's family should have the stakes they were "boxing" for.

VIII

ON SOME NINETEENTH CENTURY GAMES

ENGLISHMEN have always prided themselves on their games and sports, as distinguished from "sport" proper, or the chase. Rapidly British games of skill have domiciled themselves in every corner of the globe, and even the gentlemen of France will nowadays shoulder their golf club, or take a turn at lawn tennis, with never so much as a deprecatory "Parbleu!" or even their old-time polite insinuation that none but idiots should find pleasure in knocking balls with sticks. And it is almost as singular that two great offshoots of the race should have established other national games which, while supplanting our cricket, football, and golf in the New World, have never somehow caught on in the old country.

Three outdoor games have an enormous following, and these are, of course, cricket, football, and golf. Of the first and last I know a little; touching football, I confess, though I am an old Rugbeian,

to a frank loathing of the game. In the days when I was a light stripling in the Head's house at Rugby, hacking, otherwise kicking another man on the shins until he got out of your way, was the pastime of gentlemen. As to the glorified scrimmage, of all the evils patented by the Evil One, commend me to a scrimmage as ordered in old Rugby days! Each side gathered round the ball and shoved and kicked for all it was worth. Those on the outside strained their lungs with encouraging roars of "Shove up, Stripes!"; and the poor Stripes did "shove up" as directed, and soon received antagonistic heads in the pit of their stomachs and antagonistic boots on the edge of their shins. At length the ball would run clear of that heaving, seething mass; a half-back would seize it and run like a hare; and he was in turn "hacked" over by a half-back on the other side. Oh, it was rare science! I well recollect how a famous footballer, an all-round man in fact, in my house and myself had only one other pair to beat in order to win the school fives doubles. My partner was a half-back, and some other brute hacked at him, and he at the other brute, and their legs crossed. My friend's knee-joint went, and he was laid up for weeks, so that, thanks to football, our fives certainty was lost. In my day, boys settled all their differences by this simple and refined process of hacking. You simply took each other by the shoulders and kicked one another's shins until one had had enough

of it and said so. It was very grand! And the reason that football appeals nowadays, when the Association game at any rate is no longer one for gentlemen, to an enormous public of onlookers, is simply that it is the nearest thing the Law permits to a fight in the open, and the crowd can bet. If there were only the certainty of a death or two in each match, the popularity of football would be greater still.

Cricket is another matter. It was once even a good game, but has, of course, been ruined by sensationalism and science. I could name two players who have done more to ruin interest in the game than all the rest together, and they both play in one team. Their cricket policy is so simple as to need little explanation: all balls off the wicket left severely alone, the legs being thrown across the wicket in case of accidents; all straight balls steadily blocked; all half volleys gently returned along the ground; all long hops gingerly placed. Any fool with his share of callousness can, with sufficient practice, block away on a perfect wicket, but he is playing through the fine summer afternoons to the "Dead March" from *Saul*, not to a British Public, and if C. I. Thornton, in his day, or Jessop of Gloucestershire, had been next man in, that Public would cheer his downfall to the echo. I cannot always advocate playing to the mob, but in this case the mob shows the right taste.

As a mild personal reminiscence, I recollect play-

ing at Kettering for a twenty-two of the Midland Counties against an All-England eleven, and I also remember that on that occasion I fielded point. The All-England eleven won the toss, and in came Jupp. These were the early days of the great block system: Jupp was at the wicket for two days and made—eleven runs. He was demoralised early in his career that innings by my having just missed him at point when he tried to play a ball to square-leg. It caught the corner of his bat and came straight to point, but low down and unexpected, and so I missed. I think that Jupp did not deliberately try to hit another ball that innings. The memory of that match is rather mournful, by the way, as it was the last in which poor old G. F. Grace played, and a terrible smash he got in the forearm from a sharp return. He was perfectly well at the time, but subsequently caught a chill and was a dead man within a week.

The best cricket I ever played was with C. I. Thornton, in the days of the old Orleans club. We were playing an eleven of Bexley, or Bexhill, or whatever its name was, which included six men who played for Surrey. The great Australian team had just arrived, and Thornton had secured Spofforth, then unsurpassed as a bowler, and Murdoch, also then in his first form. It had been very wet weather, and the wicket was essentially the bowler's. I remember keeping wicket, and also that all our opponents were out for seven runs. In we went, and when I mention that I was in

third or fourth wicket down and was the not-out man, with a duck, the reader will form his own conclusions as to the quality of the run getting. In fact, we were dismissed for twenty. In went the other eleven again and scored forty-two. We therefore wanted thirty runs to win. Murdoch and Thornton opened the defence, and the first ball bowled Murdoch. I came next. Now, I beg leave to state that I cite this occasion merely as a curiosity in my cricket log, for I was always too fond of hitting to make anything of a cricketer. On this occasion, however, I knocked up the requisite thirty runs, while "Buns" Thornton simply kept his end up and scored nothing. He was never very keen on my being in with him, because if by any luck I stayed there, the pace was soon too warm for him.

I have hinted at a couple of cricketers who, in my humble opinion, went far towards destroying the spectacular interest of cricket. Picture a match between Middlesex and Notts on a hot summer's day, with the latter eleven, in the person of its champions, well set at the wickets. Heat and monotony would reign supreme, and there might now and again be a feeble, half-ironical cheer from the dozing crowd when an immeasurable batsman played a half volley somewhat firmly, a ball that Thornton or Jessop would, without an effort, have lifted over the Pavilion. Is it quite certain that these distinguished blockers are always of great service to their side? They are certainly the first

men to be beaten on a sticky wicket, when the bowler gets spin and sting on the ball. All that then results from that graceful forward stroke is that the ball flies off the edge of the bat into the hands of one of the fielders. I once, at the Oval, saw Gunn bowled round his legs without any attempt to play the ball, and the crowd yelled itself hoarse with delight. Your hitter, on the other hand, takes just one step, makes a well-pitched ball into an innocuous half-volley, and bangs it. Such scurvy treatment annoys the bowler, so he sends the next a bit short. Back steps the hitter and pulls it round to leg. The bowler regards this as heterodox. Yet the captains and secretaries of county teams, and cricket caterers generally, have to consider their public, and to make certain of drawing the biggest gate round London, you would have to include in your team three Thorntons (in his form of twenty years ago), three Jessops, three Rhodes, and two Haighs.

There is a feature of modern cricket on an up-to-date wicket that always seems to me to bring ridicule on the game, and that is the long odds at the start against the game ever being finished. A game that takes three days to play, and is even then unfinished, is no game at all. I do not say that the M.C.C. has so far attempted no reform, but it can hardly be said, for all its obvious good intentions, to have contrived anything really beneficial. The authorities seem of a sudden to be devoting themselves to minor issues, develop-

ing an unlooked-for severity in respect of shying. This is surely a pity. If a man will not hit the ball with the bat, why, then hit the man with the ball, a policy that would go a long way towards exterminating the blockhead. Why our cricket rulers cannot leave bowling alone and pay more attention to the fielder, I do not know. Our fielding is surely below criticism. How often do we read in the reports that so-and-so was missed thrice in the first two overs, after which he got set and made his century. One can only receive such intelligence in the same spirit as that in which we read of Steyn being on one occasion covered by a cartridge that refused to fire. There are, I am told, some who believe that our English cricketers field well. Now, I am, goodness knows, no pro-American, or whatever it is called, but I would commend the spectacle of a game of baseball between crack teams to any one who fancies our fielding and wants to see how fielding can be done. As an exhibition of that art, as well as of accurate long throwing, I never saw anything to beat a famous game of baseball between teams representing Boston and Chicago, which I once witnessed at the former place. Such a game would, as a spectacle, give cricket, as played anywhere in England, a long start and a beating. The "pitcher" repeatedly shows himself able to make the ball twist in the air. Mathematicians have, I believe, proved this to be impossible; but I have seen it done, and that suits me as well as

theory. So great is the force of the ball as it glances off the bat that the seats provided for the spectators are, though some considerable distance behind the batsman, protected in front with wire netting. Yet the man who takes the ball, the equivalent in fact of our wicket-keeper, never misses a catch, unless, of course, the batsman tips it and thus diverts its course. There is, of course, something not quite acceptable to us in the weird uniforms worn in most American games, and baseball is no exception to the rule, seeing that the player's head bears a wire cage that resembles the helmet of a diver, not to mention a padded apron and one immense glove on the left hand. The fielding was, for the onlookers, the prettiest part of the game. Only once, during the whole afternoon, was a catch missed, and that was off a terrific smack in the long field. Moreover, the Chicago fieldsman who should have taken it had the sun in his eyes, and that alone made him misjudge the ball. The Boston boys never missed a chance, and one of them, who fielded a sort of deep cover-point, caught three or four men that day. He would run at the ball, shading his eyes with one hand, and take it low down, and his judgment was so marvellously accurate that he gave the impression that he could never miss a catch, so only he was able to reach it. Never, through the whole of that afternoon, was there anything that could be described as a half-volley or a bad throw in. The balls were whizzed in straight as

darts. This game showed me, without exception, the very finest fielding that I have ever witnessed. With regard to the pitchers, I only wish that the M.C.C. could be prevailed on to import a dozen. They would give our men rare practice and would pitch them out somehow, though whether the county captains would call their action bowling or throwing I hardly know.

And now, having done my duty by cricket, let me devote the rest of this chapter to the praises of golf, the outdoor game that to my way of thinking stands unquestionably first, that is if my idea of a game be the correct one—namely, a contest of skill in which one person or more may find exciting and healthy recreation. The ordinary person watching ordinary golf will not see the excitement, but the playing of it is intensely absorbing. After all, the onlooker's standpoint, though much in such a game as cricket, is not everything in other pastimes. A battle would doubtless be more interesting in a sense to watch than a game of billiards, but I must confess to regarding the latter as immeasurably the more agreeable game to play. There is about golf an individuality that must recommend it to persons of the right temperament. It is largely a matter of temperament, as are most other pursuits, work or play. As a member of a cricket eleven, you are one of a crowd, and your individual failure does not signify much. As a golfer, on the other hand, you depend solely on your own efforts. There are many who

deprecate golf, and some even sneer at it and declare that they may perhaps take the game up when they are sixty years of age, dimly implying that when, after ten years of practice, they are arrived at the verdant age of seventy, they will give Harry Vardon a half and show him how the ball ought to be hit. Others there are who prefer croquet! Oh, shade of young Tom Morris! why will you not appear to such varmints with a putter in one hand and a niblick in the other? With the latter you might clearly demonstrate that any fool can dribble a ball along the ground; with the former you might thereafter brain them.

Of all doctors' prescriptions, of all elixirs, Golf must have the most hateful associations for Time, the Mower. Often enough he has had his scythe on the neck of some poor devil spending his money between the bar and racecourse; then the prospective victim took to golf, and the dread presence perforce faded for a long while. The beauty of golf lies in the continuous, though never violent, exercise. It may be questioned whether some of our more violent exercises are really conducive to health. Rowing, experts tell us, is in the long run harder on the heart than love; football often maims where it does not kill outright. Racquets and tennis can be of no real constitutional value: of all the thin, weedy, white-faced, tricked-up professional athletes, commend me to a racquets pro. It is the atmosphere of the courts that is unhealthy; there's the rub. Every exercise that is to benefit

the system must assuredly be taken in the sunlight and open air. "Well, and what about *my* game?" asks the croquet player. To whom I would humbly yet firmly make reply that a bowl of claret-cup on one side and a girl on the other may have their attractions, but they do not constitute a game.

Besides its excellent gradual exercise and training, the game of golf finds further recommendation to men of common sense in its imperceptible combination of work and play. There is a ready analogy on the racecourse. A horse trained for any given race is not continually galloped the distance of that race. In all probability he is sent the full course not more than a couple of times before the final struggle, but he gets hard and fit with plenty of long, steady work. So does the golfer.

Golf is to all intents and purposes outdoor billiards, and by the difference between the fresh air and a smoky room it is the finer game. Of billiards I will say something in another chapter; here let me indicate the chief points of resemblance. The shot from the tee is nearly always a forcing shot. Having negotiated the hazard, the further you can get, the better; but, as you approach the hole, accuracy and strength are the necessary qualifications for success. Another point in favour of golf, which also applies to billiards, is that a bad player and a good can make a sporting game by playing at handicap points. Thus, if A is scratch and B receives 18, A does not give B 18 strokes

on the round, or a stroke a hole, for it has been calculated that three-quarters of the number of strokes that divide the players are conceded to the man with the longest handicap. In this case, therefore, A would be giving B thirteen strokes, or a stroke at every hole bar five.

I have in passing alluded to the fashionable resolve to take up golf at an advanced, or at any rate mature, age. It rests on a fallacy. In reality a man cannot begin his golf too young. Proficiency at all games, as at shooting or horse-riding, is more easily acquired in youth, and any one may surely play golf from his boyhood and make a game of it to the end of his days.

IX

ON BILLIARDS AND BILLIARD PLAYERS

When I likened golf to outdoor billiards, I meant no more than that both games depend entirely on eye and strength, the latter being distinguished from force and tempered with the judgment that places the ball as near the given point as possible. In golf it is your own ball that has to be so placed; in billiards, you have to study the object ball, but the two principles remain analogous if not identical. It is not the individual shot that tells at billiards, but rather the artful leaving of the balls in a position that tends to further scoring. It must be admitted that comparison between the two cannot be pushed much further, nor have I any desire to strain it. The one is played with one ball on four miles of open links; the other with three on a table twelve feet long by six in breadth. In golf the best amateurs are little inferior to the best professionals, and I venture to doubt whether even Vardon or Taylor could have given poor Freddy

Tait a stroke on the round. Of all the lost friends —and they are not few—who have been struck off the list by this terrible war, there is none I mourned more than poor Tait, and I felt when I read of his death at Koodoosberg, and I feel still, that rejoicings are quite out of place at home while so many good fellows are tramping over the thirsty veldt, sniped at from the surrounding hills and cut off by marauding Boer bands. Tait, Ball, and Hilton have been the finest amateur golfers of our time, and I make so bold as to class them in that order. The leading professionals might possibly play a more consistently good game, but that they could have given any of these three men anything, when the latter were in form, I doubt.

This distinction between the relative status of the amateur and professional in billiards and golf is perhaps the widest gap between the games. In the former game, no amateur can come near a good professional. If Roberts were to give me 500 in 1,000, he would probably go to the table twenty times to make his 1,000, but I should go to the table many more than twenty times to make my 500. Billiards stands first among games of skill, for everything is "touch." Hundreds and thousands of amateurs are continually hammering away on the green cloth, and it must often be wondered how the ordinary individual seen in public billiard-rooms manages to find the time and practice to develop into a professional. The man who said that poets were born, not made, should have

bracketed billiard players with the immortals, at any rate in this respect. During the twenty years between 1875 and 1895, the very finest exponents of English billiards were John Roberts, Junr., W. Cook, W. Mitchell, W. J. Peall, Stanley, Richards, Shorter, Taylor, Sala, and the three Bennetts. These at any rate were the men who throughout the eighties played to the English, and more particularly to the London, public. John Roberts, out and away the finest of our players, is the son of a former champion. If I remember rightly, the championship had been wrested from the elder Roberts by young William Cook, who, almost immediately, had to give it up to the younger Roberts. Stanley and Richards were own brothers, the former having changed his family name, and brothers also were the three Bennetts. Unless I mistake, too, there is now a young Cook, a son of William, in the field, so that it is surely obvious that proficiency at billiards is in great measure a hereditary gift. This view moreover gains confirmation from the presence of thousands of markers, clerks, idlers, and busy men alike, who spend a considerable proportion of their time round the tables all over the world without ever attaining to anything like the form of the few named above.

I saw the last championship ever played for, and what would I not give to see it played over again! It was between W. Cook and young John Roberts, and the remarkable difference in their styles greatly enhanced the interest of the occasion.

John Roberts was ever sharp and decisive; Cook, with his long, fair beard, would continually thrust out his tongue to moisten his lips. Whenever he rested the cue, the fingers of his left hand would apparently drum out a tune. Twice at least you would think him on the point of making the stroke before he actually did so. These are trifling mannerisms, but they always interest me in great performers. They may sound irksome and slow, but the delicacy and exactness of the men were a delight to watch. Still, I think the style of John Roberts was, and is, the soundest and most workmanlike possible. I have seen him—so have most of us—when well placed, make nursery cannons faster than the marker could call them out. That was the last occasion on which Cook tried to wrest the laurels from the champion's brow, and a plucky fight he made of it. Though practically a beaten man, he pulled out a break of close on 150 the last night. They played the championship in those days on what was known as the "championship table pockets," jennies into the middle pocket being practically an impossibility. Any one was welcome to play the spot stroke, nor did the boredom of watching it last long.

New players have arisen and called themselves "champions," and a leading sporting paper has for some reason or other extolled their merits and sneered witheringly at the position taken up by John Roberts. I hold no brief for Roberts, and his character concerns me as little as that of the great

Napoleon, but I never yet watched him play without admiring his coolness. I never saw his face betray the slightest emotion, however the game went. The flukes of his opponent might provoke a passing smile, but I have watched him narrowly at the close of a 400 break, when the crowd of spectators shouted itself hoarse at such a display, and seen him quietly pull down the window cord, calmly oblivious of the plaudits. Men who attain to that degree of proficiency at games like golf or billiards must, in my opinion, have iron nerves, as well as a quite exceptional command over themselves. If the nerve but wavers for a second, the hand jerks, the eye will not see the ball, and the game is lost. Like Napoleon, John Roberts has left the old scenes and gone forth to conquer new worlds. His magic wand may be less artistic than that with which George Morland roamed the Midlands, drawing a horse or pig for his dinner, but it seems mighty attractive to the sporting fraternities in the cities down under. Other "champions" have arisen and played one against the other, and no one much cares now who takes the title. W. J. Peall might go on for a week playing the spot stroke on a bucket pocket table, but the fact remains that no man has dared to meet John Roberts for the championship since the day when, twenty years ago, he defeated W. Cook. Matches have been "arranged" for him. Ives, the great American cannon player, played him a match that may best be described as a cross between

skittles and bluff. A special table was built with extra small pockets, and actually the stroke that is barred at the game of each player (the "jam" stroke, in which two of the balls are jammed in a top pocket, while the player glides backwards and forwards past the balls with his own, scoring cannon after cannon) was in this case allowed. As a result, Ives got the balls there, and he played away at them for two whole days. Well, it is possible to handicap a man out of the race as well as a horse. All that English billiard players have dared to do with John Roberts during the last twenty years is to adopt a transatlantic game of bluff. Long before my time it was agreed that any man aspiring to the championship challenged on the small-pocket table the sole difference being that this table called for greater skill, greater accuracy, and greater power. Why, I ask, was it suddenly discovered that the championship table was all rubbish, and that W. J. Peall was the real champion?

There are weekly journals in these advanced days which offer prizes to any one who succeeds in naming the best-dressed woman or the worst-dressed man (I won the latter once). If one of these editors, who insist on having future event prices quoted in the penny journals when, in nine cases out of ten, they do not exist, would offer a prize for naming the finest player of English billiards that ever handled a cue, it is a hundred to one I would name the winner.

X

DOGS AND DOG TRIALS

A GOOD dog! I do not mean the "Hi, Fifi! Sit up! Isn't he sweet?" style of thing, but a good and serviceable companion, a necessary adjunct of sport. For many years I have had good dogs; the extent to which I miss them is the measure of their value. Alas! the working years of a dog's life are but short. Somewhere I have read that the working years may roughly be estimated at four times the age at which any animal reaches maturity. As a dog reaches maturity at about two years old, that would give eight years as his working life. A man, reaching maturity at twenty, should be good for eighty years; and so indeed, but for drink and disease, he would be. A horse, mature between three and four years old, should work for twelve or sixteen. Yet less than one-half of these periods can actually be reckoned on. Lucky is he who gets four seasons out of a dog and twenty out of himself! This may provoke in some quarters a supercilious and impatient sniff, and the reader may protest: "'Gad, sir! I am nearer fifty than forty-five, and was never fitter in my life!" No doubt; I know. Just run after that cricket ball of your

boy's and pitch it up. Oh! just a bit stiff, are you? Not been working those muscles lately? Tut, man! you'll be stiffer next year, stiffer still the year after, till at last the only thing you'll have the use of will be your tongue. The irony of it! when your limbs have failed, Nature lets you talk of the things you can no longer do. It would seem that I have got somewhat off the topic under notice. Dogs, not men, are my theme; yet, if you want a good dog, you must find a good man. Nine men out of ten may buy one of the best dogs ever seen, and, given time, they will ruin the beast. Some will take a week; some a day; some, again, five minutes: the result is the same. The dog does not know its new master as it knew the old; there is some subtle lack of sympathy; the voice and gesticulations are different; the pronunciation of "Damn!" is unintelligible. The new owner may strike his latest acquisition, and very little whipping will irretrievably ruin a sensitive animal. The best men at dogs I ever knew very rarely hit them. There are some men who can do more with a glance or severe word of rebuke than others with a cudgel; these men are greatly in the minority, but these also are the men to break dogs and make them. And the well-timed word of encouragement and praise, so often withheld just when it would work wonders, is sometimes of even greater value. If I wanted to buy a good dog at present, there are just two men that I can think of on the moment to whom I would apply. Both are keepers, the one in Lincoln-

shire, the other in Aberdeenshire. The former I only once saw working his dog, but that once went a long way.

The reader may by this not unreasonably ask for my meaning of "a good dog." Dear reader, a good dog, like the colour of a good horse, may be anything. For shooting game over dogs, a form of sport that is rapidly dying out, thanks to short stubbles and increasing scarcity of cover to hold

A GOOD DOG.

the birds, as well as to the growing popularity of driving, the true-bred pointer or setter is indispensable, the cur useless. But for most sport nowadays the good dog means a good retriever or even a good spaniel, yet I have known all manner of awful curs perfection from the fetch-and-carry point of view. One of the best dogs of the kind, that I met not long ago, was half deerhound; what the other half was no one knew. On properties where shoot-

ing over dogs is still in vogue, the proprietor always provides the pointers or setters, and the dog that the shooter has to cart about with him is the dog that will find and bring him the bird he has shot. The best dog of the kind that I ever had was a small black retriever called Watty, and, long past as the occasion is, I well recall the incident that induced me to offer for him. He belonged to a keeper on Lord Aberdeen's estate, who had come over to Aboyne to assist at the pheasant shooting. It was on the last of the three days' shoot that Watty particularly attracted my attention, though on the first and second days I had more than once noticed his quickness and obedience. There were hundreds of rabbits that year, and once or twice, when the beaters got near the guns and the rabbits grew thicker and thicker, Watty would gaze round his master's legs with ears cocked and eyes dilated, always watching, yet never running in. On the last day, as we were walking along the edge of some marshy, peaty ground to take up a position near a small lock, a duck rose, and one of the party put up his gun and hit the bird very hard. The shot did not "fetch" the bird, which fell a hundred and fifty, or perhaps two hundred, yards out in the marsh. "That's lost!" I thought to myself, and instinctively looked at Watty standing beside his master. Other keepers were on the spot with other dogs, but the expression of both men and beasts made it evident that they were not going to mess around after that duck. Watty stood erect and

alert, gazing in the direction of the duck. Once he looked quickly at his master, then back to the duck. Ledingham must have caught that appeal, for he made one motion of his arm, and Watty was off. We watched him flounder and disappear and reappear. I forget how long he was gone, but he did not come back without the duck in his mouth. When I say that Watty was the best dog I ever had—and I may as well add that on the same grounds he was the best I ever saw—it is not that he was the most brilliant, but rather that he was always on the look out. The brute could hardly have spoken more plainly had he had the gift of speech. "Good shot! dead bird! . . . Another tailer; I shall have trouble with that one!" Yet he never stirred till ordered. He would poke his nose round the edge of your leg to get a better view, but that was all. The result of our partnership was that I got many a bird that would otherwise never have been gathered; and whenever I got a bird that I thought would run, I simply gave Watty the office, and before the bird touched the ground he would be speeding after it and seize it in his firm, soft mouth before it realised the situation. On the general principles of offering keepers a tempting price for their dogs I prefer that my conduct in the case of Watty should not stand as an example, for it is a selfish act, very like buying adopted children from poor women. It was my man Nils Petersen, on my reindeer trip in Norway, who quite correctly, though unwittingly, gave me a sharp rap over the knuckles

when, in like manner, I asked him to offer the Lapp herd of tame reindeer fifteen sovereigns for his dog Starm. Said Nils, "The money would be a great thing for the man and might tempt him, but you should not offer it, for how is the poor devil to round up a thousand head of deer when his dog is gone?" And I had only wanted that dog because of its singular beauty! Yes, Nils; you were right, and I am glad you rubbed it in!*

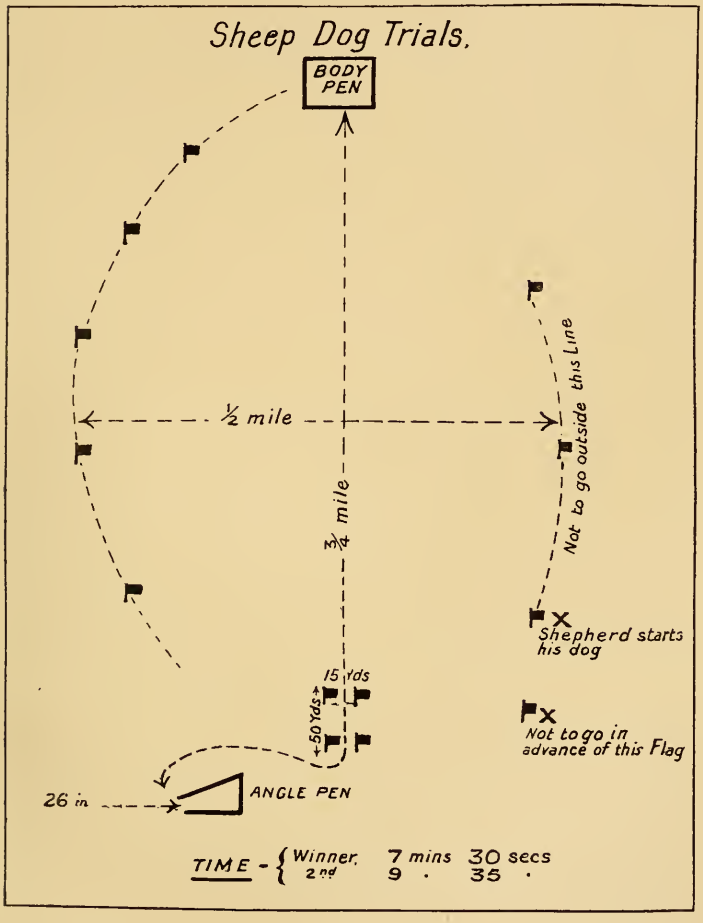
A good spaniel, being shorter in the leg and lacking both speed and range, harder in the mouth too as a rule and likewise less tractable, is more difficult to get, but I have had a few. The best I ever had was in my possession just one day. I bought him for £10 from a keeper on Lord Westmorland's property, Apethorpe. Ah, Apethorpe! what memories you awake! I can see, as in a dream, your late beloved master smoking that thirty-third fatal cigarette while he arranged his own private handicap on the forthcoming Cambridgeshire . . . if it should chance to differ greatly from that of the official handicappers, then they are merely d—d fools. I see once more that stout old party, whom Sir Joshua painted in his best red velvet suit, walking out of the frame in the dining-room. Alas! where has he walked to? I see Jem Goater cantering once more across Morley Lawn. And I see, worst of all, that I have left my spaniel

* There is a story in the Old Testament pointing the same moral; but mine will suffice, and perhaps it is the more wholesome.

in the lurch. Well, I took him out grouse-driving on a Yorkshire moor, and Mr. Shuttleworth saw him working and asked me what I would take for him. I asked £25, and Mr. S. demurred. Next morning I was astir very early to catch a train, and was just stepping into the fly when a valet rushed up with Shuttleworth's cheque for the price. So I saw the spaniel no more. And Mr. Shuttleworth no longer shoots, and the spaniel is, I hope, nestling in the lap of Diana, blinking at the misty herds of buffalo that cross and recross the vast hunting grounds of the hereafter, pursued by the ghosts of Sitting Bull and his painted braves.

No one who has not actually witnessed it would believe how wonderfully man can convey his commands to his dog. I recently witnessed some sheep-dog trials on the occasion of the visit of the Crown Prince of Germany to Lord Lonsdale's lovely place, Lowther. The accompanying rough plan, for which I am indebted to Lord Lonsdale, shows the whole disposition of the ground. Beside the shepherd, at the starting-point, sits the dog, knowing exactly what is expected of him. At a given signal three sheep are loosed from the body pen, and the dog has to be off and get round them and bring them between the outer flags, then between the two pairs of flags, this last part of the course being only 50 yards long by 15 wide, into the angle pen, the entrance to which is but 26 inches across. Not until the sheep have been got between the last pair of flags close to the angle pen may the owner

of the dog leave his place. Then, in a moment, he rushes down to the angle pen and assists his animal,



with hat and stick and sundry Cumberland oaths, to persuade the stupid sheep to go in. Ten minutes

is the time allowed from start to finish, and at the expiration of that time a whistle is blown and the trial is over. Such is the general procedure, but the details are most interesting to watch. The signal given, three sheep wander forth aimlessly from the large pen, while along by the right of the outer flags goes a little cur-like-looking colly, galloping for all it is worth. Suddenly, the sheep being in a hollow and therefore invisible to the dog, he sits down and looks back for instructions how to proceed. His master gives three peculiar whistles through his fingers, at the same time waving his right hand. Off again goes Laddie, and now he bears to the left by the pen, and the sheep come in view. Round them he goes like an arrow, and now there come frantic whistles and waves of either arm as the sheep swerve off the course, followed by softer whistles and downward strokes as they come steadily on and it is best for the dog to keep quiet. The words can be heard now by the approaching dog, and we are glad that they are in a foreign tongue, for they give the idea that the dog will be brained and the sheep slaughtered as soon as the man can get near them. But see, they are nearing the first pair of inner flags, and through these they must go. The dog is lying fifteen yards perhaps behind them. Now the silly brutes edge off to the right. Laddie! Laddie! Laddie! whout! whew! wang! dang! and the stick in the shepherd's brawny hands whirls round with unpleasant significance. But the dog is round them,

and the sheep have turned . . . steady, steady, they are coming too much our way. Another whistle, a wave of the hand, and Laddie is crawling behind them, and they catch sight of him out of the tail of their eye and shift away again. Slowly they walk straight between the flags, amid breathless silence on the part of the spectators. Now five minutes are gone. The sheep must not, however, be hustled, for they are going sedately towards the last flags, Laddie following at respectful distance. He crouches and squats, for all the world like a cat after a mouse, turning now and again quick glances towards his master, who unceasingly addresses words to him, sometimes soft and low, sometimes loud and threatening. My own opinion at this juncture is that the sheep would have gone straight through the last flags, but Laddie, whether through over anxiety or through some misinterpretation of orders, got too near them on the right flank, and off they started in a mutton canter to the left of the flags. What shouting and gesticulating on the part of the man, and what quick admission of error on the part of the dog, who is round them again before they can have got ten yards, and is barking with such evident annoyance that they are easily turned and walk slowly back! Down (whistle), down! and the stick pounds the ground, and Laddie drops to earth like a well-trained setter to the shot. The sheep are the right side of the flags; Laddie executes a quick flanking movement and again squats; the sheep turn and walk towards the centre of the

flags, but somehow they do not seem to fancy that way. They branch off a little to the right, but there is a sharp cry from the master, and Laddie darts straightway a dozen paces or more. The sheep see him, and they halt, and turn, and again halt right between the flags. They hesitate, and the dog gets his orders *sotto voce* and crawls slowly towards the sheep. Once more they face up to the

A TYPICAL SHEEP-DOG.

left, and this time a sharp cry from his owner sends Laddie darting towards them, and they are through the last obstacle. And now the man dashes also for the pen, and with much vigour assists his dog in driving the silly, frightened animals through the narrow opening. Sometimes one enters without demur and the other two make a bolt for it, but they do not get more than a few yards away when the dog has them back. At this moment the judge's whistle goes, and the trial is over. The winner on

this occasion, Mr. John Mason's Jack, took seven minutes thirty seconds, and the second, also Jack, the property of Mr. H. J. Hindson, took nine minutes thirty-five seconds. We were given every opportunity of inspecting and measuring, had we so desired, the pen with man, dog, and sheep around, and hard enough it looked to induce three sheep to enter an opening of only twenty-six inches on an open tract of ground. I took a photograph (which shall be suppressed) of Mr. Akrigg with his two dogs, famous though beaten to-day, with Lord Lonsdale standing beside him. Mr. Akrigg subsequently worked the two dogs together. Six sheep were loosed from the pen at the far end, and the idea was, after they passed through the last flags, to divide them, letting three go and penning the rest. They both worked prettily, particularly Laddie, which must, I imagine, be a cross between an Irish terrier and a seal; at any rate, there is no appearance of collie about him. Well, we got on quite famously till the two were divided, but there was no question of penning the three, for "Lady" promptly turned it up. And no wonder! A hound trial was arranged to follow the sheep trials, and already the men were leading their hounds out, and their barking naturally confused Lady. It is asking rather too much of a dog to attend to orders and sheep when twenty other dogs are yapping not fifty yards away. So Mr. Akrigg had to desist, and we viewed the hound trials from a high terrace that commands one of the grandest views that I know in England. For miles to the

left up the valley of the Lowther, where Haweswater nestles at the foot of a precipitous mountain, and beyond, where purple, green, and blue merge together, go the rich green fields and high grey walls of Cumberland. I think they belong to Cumberland, by the way, but there is a good deal of confusion with Westmoreland, and it is as well not to be too dogmatic. I know an old public-house in the vicinity with a notice over the door, "Welcome to Cumberland!" So I imagine that on entering it I am in Cumberland. When I leave it I never know where I am, though this is not, as might seem to be implied, the result of drink, but arises rather from a certain sameness in the beautiful scenery. White villages and isolated houses lie dotted about in the green background, and opposite there runs a purple-crowned range of mountains shutting out the famous Lake District.

But to our hound trials! At a given signal the hounds were loosed, and away they bounded on the strong scent of the trail. It was pretty to see them dash into the river, where for a moment their voices were silent; but, as they breasted the opposite bank, that music broke forth which thrills the soul of every sportsman, which sets his nerves a-tingling, which quickens his pulse more than all the music of all the masters and all the voices of great singers. It is the same whether the hounds are after a soft-eyed deer or after a cunning old fox, or even after a mouldy herring. Looking at it from the other standpoint, it takes one's thoughts

back to the "good old days," when some poor devil of a slave, fleeing from the knotted lash of the Christian planter, his owner, heard the distant baying of the bloodhounds on his trail, and raised his hands to heaven while great tears dropped from his bloodshot eyes!

Most of the party at Lowther had binoculars, and with these they were able to follow the hounds over the whole nine-mile course. I had none, and was perforce content with occasional glimpses of a white dot clearing a wall or crossing a field. Some one thought they were only sheep. "There they come!" cries some one, "they're into the Park now." This gave me the clue, for I knew where they must enter the Park; and there, sure enough, they came, two white dogs leading and then a wide gap. On they came for the winning post, as hard as their tired legs would carry them, and the white hound that I had seen ahead of the rest was, as they say in racing parlance, "pipped on the post," and another won.

I have devoted a few pages to the account of these dog trials, because those with the sheep more particularly appeared to me to illustrate what I contended earlier in this chapter — the wonderful amount of instruction that may be conveyed to an intelligent and well-trained dog with no more than a word or a gesture. I must now say something more generally on the subject of dog shows, functions that have their ardent admirers as well as their equally extreme critics. Perhaps a moderate attitude is best justified by the facts.

XI

HORSE AND DOG SHOWS: ARE THEY BENEFICIAL?

THERE is a notion in many quarters that shows do a vast deal of good in the interests of breeding. They are supposed to bring producers and consumers, farmers and traders, amateurs and professionals in touch, and, by giving rise to friendly rivalry, they are thought to conduce to the improvement of the breeds exhibited. Now I am quite prepared to grant that immense benefit of the kind may accrue to wurzels and taters, and such vegetables — or beasts, as sheep and swine; but when we come to the horse and dog, the noblest of our subjects, the mainstay of the chase, I question whether shows have not done more harm than good. And the more I think over the matter, indeed, the less do I even question. Let me at the outset make an exception in favour of the foxhound, who, luckily for him, has special shows and special judges and is attended by his scarlet-coated guardians, jealous of their pack and anxious for its

success. But with the other hundred breeds of dogs, as with the hunter and hackney, the case is woefully different.

What sort of selections would the average show judges make if requested to adjudicate on the merits of horses paraded for the Derby? They would, of course, have to be kept unbiassed by any knowledge of how the betting went, and I would back them to make the most ludicrous mistakes. Would they, for instance, in Ormonde's Derby, have given him priority over The Bard for make and shape? Or when Sanfoin won the race, would they have preferred him to Surefoot? The thoroughbred horse is the most beautiful animal that walks the face of the earth, the highest expression of man's skill as a discriminating breeder of stock. Where else do we find that combination of symmetry, the satin coat, the long galloping quarters, the blood eye and nostril? There is a racing proverb which says that "They go in all shapes," and that adage sums up to my mind the whole use of racing and the whole uselessness of shows. In the show ring it is all "Looks"; on the racecourse there are other virtues.

And what do the shows do for the hunter? Nothing, I think, beyond encouraging men to breed soft, overfed, cotton-wool brutes that are carted from show to show round the countryside by professionals, the disgust and despair of every one in the district who really owns a hunter. It might be thought that a hunter should be able to follow hounds over all manner of obstacles, hedges, ditches

and all the rest, but what can the prize hunter in the show ring know of either hounds or obstacles?

"Gracious, sir!" exclaims the professional dealer, horror-stricken at the bare suggestion, "jump a valuable 'oss like that! Why, he might hit his leg. Did I like your 'oss? Why, yes, but it's hardly a show 'oss; you should do better with him in the field when the 'unting season's on." Thus the gentleman with the red rosette.

Now, if I took a stuffed polecat out ferreting rabbits, he would vote me as mad as if I brought a lame donkey on which to ride round the Grand National course. Yet the prize hunter that has never seen a fence appears to this connoisseur a sweetly reasonable product.

If it be true that the prize hunter is fed on oil-cake and wrapped in cotton wool, I know not what to say of the hackney. It is on authentic record that he sometimes walks from the station to the show yard where the distance is not too great, but little more exposure is risked. It is true that we see fine movers at shows, but these are often too extravagant in their action, and one rarely sees a horse with high front action having hind action in unison. I know a gent who drives black horses about London, and he is commonly regarded as a judge of such matters, yet the front legs of his horses always come shooting up in the air and their hind legs come pottering after anyhow. Action, to be good, must be true all round, and the grandest action is when all four legs seem in

the air together. I say advisedly *seem*, because since Mr. Rouch and others have taken to photographing horses in motion, heaven alone knows what they do with their legs. For just the hundredth part of a second the feet seem poised an inch or two above the ground, and then they drop as gracefully as snowflakes. Personally, I would sooner see a pair of Irish blood hunters in a phaeton.

I was only once really badly treated at a show. I had a bay hackney that I called Bydand, and I had taken a lot of prizes with him. One day I sent him to the show at the Agricultural Hall, Islington, and the judges could not for a long time make up their mind how to award the prize in that particular class. The decision lay between mine and another, and these were trotted round and round the ring for quite twenty minutes. Eventually mine was awarded first prize, and the horses went back to their stalls. Not long afterwards I heard that my horse was objected to on the score of lameness: the vet. attending the show had been called in and pronounced my horse lame, and I was disqualified. There was no possible doubt as to the lameness, for there was plainly the mark showing how some one had got at the animal and hit it over the foreleg, but I have always thought that the disqualification was an unfair one all the same. For not much less than half an hour that horse had been kept going before the judges, and the slightest sign of lameness at the time must

have been detected. I believe the disqualification would have been invalid if I had entered the horse with a vet.'s certificate of soundness, but I knew that the animal was as sound as a bell, and did not think it necessary. You might almost as well go to church with your certificate of birth pinned on your back as a proof of what you think you are —even then, in this world of errors, you might be wrong.

This much may be said at any rate for horse shows, that you see fine animals there and meet sporting friends. But dog shows! Who shall describe the typical dog show? A hurly-burly of yapping, angry, discontented dogs chained up in parrot cages presided over by a band of gaunt and ugly women, who occasionally pat their suffocated darlings and then resume the knitting of mittens. Five persons out of six who show dogs seem to me to be women, and I never yet heard of a real sportsman at such a function unless he had just looked in to see that everything was going all right, that his wife's "Tottie" had been properly fed and that all the dogs had got prizes. They all do.

What real lady would show a dog that was not at the least highly commended? Matters are arranged so as to satisfy every one except the dogs. For them the days of the show must be a misery indeed. And the judges? Fancy standing in the centre of a circle of a dozen ladies holding rival fox terriers by slender chains! Personally I should give the rosette to the best-looking woman, because there

is not a fox terrier left in this country, so the rest would not matter much. The extinction of the fox terrier, once a typically English breed, is the direct outcome of the shows. Judges long ago decided that the terrier's head was by far the most important point about the animal, with the result that make and shape and power are now entirely neglected, and your modern fox terrier is a cross between a china doll and a whippet. Nevermore shall we see such dogs in our midst as those I well remember in the old days at home. The best that my brother got were from Wooten of Nottingham. There were Tartar, a pure white dog, with deep broad chest and short legs; Old Trap, with his black-and-tan head, the father of Young Trap, who was a bit long in the leg and outlived them all. Then, too, there was Worry, the grandest, broadest, bravest little bitch that ever worried a rat or tackled a cat; and, lastly, there was graceful Famous, whose distinguishing peculiarity was a rigid objection to the attentions of the other sex. Daily their shades float before my eyes, for they run to the call of lips that are silent on earth, and the hall that once they guarded is dull and empty!

They had a good stamp of fox terrier once in the Milton Kennel. Poor Tom Fitzwilliam always had two or three, and always of the short-legged, sturdy type that you never see now. But I do not remember his ever having a dog that would have beaten any of those five I named above. Perhaps, for hard work, the wire-haired fox terrier was a

better type, for his thicker coat naturally protected him against the bites and brambles that so easily damaged his brother. The best dogs that I ever saw of this class were those owned by Lord Lonsdale when he hunted the Woodland Pytchley. But then he always has the best of everything, far more so than much richer men.

It is ridiculous to see what a fuss they make of colour at these same dog shows. A sound racing adage says that "A good horse is never a bad colour!" Personally, I would extend the principle to the dog. Yet it is all colour at the shows. Fancy if we raced on this principle! "The next race for bay horses that have never been placed before," or "This race for chestnut mares, two-year-old only." Where would the poor Bard have come in, I should like to know, with his curious coat of roan chestnut ticked with white hairs, who won every race in his two-year-old career?

One class of dog I have known well all my life, and that is the Chow. Indeed, my sister, Lady Margaret Ormsby Gore, had, if not the first, at any rate the first important Chow that ever came to this country, for the best of them have descended from Old Peggy. Yet the fact of my own people having carried off the prizes in this class for years —I am probably surrounded by as many dog medals and trophies as most people—will not deter me from saying that, had I been an owner, I should long since have given up showing for prizes. This seems perhaps an ungrateful thing to say, but I must

say it. The unfairness and ignorance displayed in judging Chows is gradually bringing about their extinction in this country, like that of the fox terrier. The Chow proper may be black or red, or for that matter green, but the forehead must be broad, with short, sharp prick ears, pig eyes that are never prominent, foxy snout, black mouth,

Photo by Thos. Fall.

A CHOW.

broad chest, big bone, back like a billiard table. The coat must be thick and furry, *not long and feathery*, and the tail must curl over the back. Any one in doubt as to the better looking of two rival Chows may safely give the prize to the larger, if equally symmetrical. I feel rather sorry to have to be thus frank about Chows and their judges.

Indeed, the ethics of dog shows do not lend themselves to a combination of truth and courtesy in the telling, and perhaps I had better write finis to this chapter ere I find myself on yet more delicate ground.

Art Photo. Co. London

Drawn by Harrington Bird

Ormonde Winning the Hardwicke Stakes. 1887.

XII

WHY I TOOK TO LAYING

GETTING lost in the Rockies is in a way a picturesque experience, however much my halting pen may have failed to convey just that impression; but getting lost, financially, in London is best summed up in that one unlovely word, "broke!" The experience is so commonplace as to need no description, and the icy note from your bankers conveys its message in that polite phraseology which is really the height of rudeness. The only worse possible forecast of bankruptcy comes to us from great physicians, one of whom once had to give a poor brother of my own just twenty-one days to live. He carried out the great man's programme to the day!

I received, then, the said intimation from my obedient servants, —— & Co., and I learnt thus for the first time that the business from which was derived the bulk of my income was very shaky. Every penny that I had in the world was locked up in this concern; there had been no word of warning to enable me to avert a crisis; and here

was I, over thirty years of age, and with no trade at my fingers' ends save that of amusing myself, facing the world with about as dismal an outlook as was conceivable.

An aimless stroll on the morning of the bankers' letter brought me by the merest chance across a man who had made a pile laying against horses. With the proceeds of that calling he had bought a brewery down in the country, in a part I knew well, and the second venture was locally regarded as having been as profitable as the first. The inspiration came upon me to make a clean breast of my trouble to him and find out whether there was any chance of doing something at his old trade. But he shook his head when he had given my story his best attention.

"It isn't the game it was," he said ruefully. "There's a jockey ring, and there's altogether too much of the 'dog eat dog' about it nowadays. Bad debts, too, swallow up the profits. Besides, a gentleman like yourself would make nothing of the job. To succeed at that you must be a hard-headed, hard-hearted sort of a chap, who thinks of nobody but hisself!"

This might be regarded as complimentary or otherwise. At any rate he meant it kindly, so I thanked him for his advice, and promptly resolved not to take it. Sometimes since I have thought that he was right, but something had to be done, and that at once. The world might think what it pleased, but that would not make it necessary for

me to behave otherwise than like a gentleman. This undercurrent of apology may sound fatuous in the more wholesome air we breathe to-day, but the period I am writing about was that of the early eighties, when the English mind was steeped in Puritanism, and the crime of being found out was just being regarded as the greatest social offence. If, in those early eighties, a lady rode alone in a hansom or dined alone in a restaurant, she was promptly voted no better than she should be! To appreciate the complete idiocy of the early Victorian era as it deserves, we must put the clock back some decades and contemplate with mournful eyes the time in which John Leech drew his inimitable poke-bonnets and crinolines. Really, one sometimes despairs of the new civilisations when contrasted with the old. Geniuses scheme silently in their laboratories; they subjugate steam to make Vancouver Island as accessible to-day as Aberdeen was eighty years ago; they enslave electricity to save servant girls the trouble of trimming lamps. Yet can a Tesla or an Edison do anything to mend our inherent stupidity?

Well, I paid a call that afternoon to an individual whom, for present purposes, it will suffice to call C. He had offices somewhere off St. James's Street, where I had had more than one betting transaction with him. He received me affably and listened to my business, and from his manner of asking me to call again on the following day, I could see that he thought well of my proposition. Next day indeed

we fixed up conditions of partnership, not all that I would have had them, but a great deal better from my point of view than they might have been. Briefly, I was to find a couple of thousand pounds and to take a fourth share of the business from that moment—it was the month of June—until the Manchester meeting in November, which ends the flat racing season. That period being ended, it was agreed that either of us might declare the partnership dissolved. Private transactions moreover were to be kept distinct from the business of the firm. The first thousand I knew where to lay hands on; the second I got from my poor brother, who is long since gone to watch his horses' shades take their morning exercise on the plains of Elysium—Pero Gomez, Pretender, Stockwell, Rosicrucian, aye, and Cadogan, the most promising horse he ever owned, which was beaten for the Two Thousand Guineas by a head and broke down in the Derby in Sir Bevys's year.

The following Monday, then, I paid C. his two thousand, and was henceforth in daily attendance in those sumptuous ground-floor rooms. Here, equipped with telephone and tape-machine, three of us, Mrs. C., a sedate Scotch clerk named Henderson, and myself, attended to office business, while C. was away at race meetings, where he made an in-and-out book, backing one horse and laying others.

Never, either before or since, have I met any one quite like Mrs. C. She was tall and thin, and had

pronounced features and prominent blue-grey eyes. Her greatest passion was for pet birds and other animals, and I can see her now as she used to stand cleaning out the cage of her favourite mynah, a black fowl with a yellow beak, which used to take quite excessive credit for occasionally uttering the word "Jack" in raucous tones. At other times the wants of a covey of canaries would perhaps be absorbing her attention, when something like the following little episode would be enacted.

A man would enter the room with a determined expression on his face.

"A monkey on Prince Edward, please, Mrs. C.," he would say, and over his shoulder we would get a vision of Henderson, the clerk, looking anxious and in obvious doubt. Mrs. C. always rose to the occasion. Pausing for a moment, as if lost in thought, she would make some absent-minded apology for her untidy condition, and would suddenly say—

"Why, certainly!", also admonishing the faithful Henderson for failing to book so trifling an order. I watched this pantomime so frequently that at length I came to one conclusion, that Mrs. C., though a poor judge of horses' form, was a very capable judge of men, knowing at a glance who might and who might not be trusted. Her mistakes in this way were remarkably few. I always liked her personally, though a hard expression would sometimes come over her face that made me feel uncomfortable. Her opinion of myself I never

gathered by word or deed. She always listened to my suggestions with great courtesy, but on the whole she consulted me as little on bets as on birds.

At last, somewhat suddenly, trouble overtook this peaceful establishment. It will be remembered by any one with an even superficial memory of turf annals that a celebrated mare named Florence, and that greatest of public favourites among handicap horses, Bendigo, were running at that time. Bendigo went down so well with the public, not only by reason of its grand looks and weight-carrying build, but also for its owner's sake, for never was there a sportsman further removed from the playing of hanky-panky tricks or more eager to win. It did not seem to matter how far the handicappers piled the pounds and stones on his broad back, honest old Bendigo was nearly always in the front as they raced up the straight for home. The greatest race of my time was that for the Hardwicke Stakes at Ascot, the year when Bendigo (J. Watts) was third out of four starters, and the Duke of Westminster's Ormonde (T. Cannon), and Mr. Vyner's Minting (J. Osborn), four-year-olds both, and desperate rivals, were before him. What luck to own a horse like Minting and run up against a giant like Ormonde!

For some seconds in that wonderful race it looked uncommonly like Bendigo beating the two of them. It is all uphill for at least half a mile at Ascot, and ought to stop any horse that makes a

noise. Well, great brown Bendigo and the two bays came racing up the straight, the fourth horse, Phil, being tailed off and coming in with the crowd. All the way past the long stands it was anybody's race. Never were such cheering and swaying and surging amid the packed masses of onlookers before or since. The brown horse cracked just opposite the rails that divided Tattersall's ring from the Royal Enclosure, while the two giants were left to race home, desperately ridden. Once again the great Roarer got his head in front, which enabled him to retire from the turf with an unbeaten record. How on earth so good a sportsman as the late Duke of Westminster was ever induced to sell a faithful servant like Ormonde beats the average understanding, unless it was that he was afraid to breed from a whistler. Yet most of us would surely rather have a whistler like Ormonde than ninety-nine out of a hundred horses that commonly pass the vet.

Of a truth, Ormonde had some red-letter days before retiring. Who that heard it will ever forget the groan that went up from the ring the year before, when Archer let him have his head in the preliminary canter for the Derby? The long, sweeping, mechanical action meant the bookmakers' despair. Yet to his dying day the late Robert Peck firmly believed that, on that occasion at least, Ormonde did not win on his merits, but should have been beaten by The Bard. The Bard had not hitherto been beaten, as a two-year-old, and was

probably the best horse of his size that had been seen for years. Yet even the prowess of The Bard availed little against the stride and staying power of Ormonde. Downhill running, like that at Epsom, was a very moderate effort for a horse that, even when broken-winded, could beat Minting a year later on the uphill finish at Ascot. In that particular Derby it really did not look as if he struck the turf with his hoofs half a dozen times from Tattenham Corner to the judge's box. His action was less indeed that of a horse than of some Brobdingnagian golf ball struck by a giant Vardon. For plucky The Bard be it said, that he hunted the giant home on this occasion, and that this was moreover his one defeat as against sixteen consecutive wins. Those were the Homeric days of the turf. They may come again, yet one hopes for them without much faith. It is quite impossible to compare the horses of different years. The turf has its fat as it has its lean years, and I venture my own humble opinion that there has never yet been another horse in England that would have defeated either Ormonde, Minting, or The Bard in their three-year-old careers. The best looking of modern horses to my mind is Mr. Rose's Cyllene, but looks are a matter of opinion, and more important in the show ring than on the course. For all I know, Mr. John Porter may think that Flying Fox was up to the form of the aforenamed trio, and he has every right to that opinion.

From this digression—and not to write digres-

sions in turf matters is not to write at all—I come back to the rift within the lute. Betting on the Cambridgeshire had started, and Florence and Bendigo were entered in the race. C.'s tout at Newmarket, where Florence was trained, would have none of the mare, and vowed that she was lame. Her owner kept backing her, and the more he backed her, the more C. laid against her. In one bet he laid ten thousand to a thousand against her with her owner, and this alone should have warned him of the true state of affairs. But no; his successes had been many; his reputation on the racecourse stood high; and he made no secret of it that he was laying for all he was worth against Florence and backing Bendigo to win him a large sum into the bargain.

It is merely recalling unforgotten records of the Cambridgeshire when I remind the reader that Florence won, with Bendigo second. Settling day came round, and C. frankly declared himself unable to settle. With the positions reversed, he stood to have won a hundred thousand pounds. Dr. Johnson, or some one with a similar weakness for saying rude, smart things, once remarked that it was better to be born lucky than rich. I was born neither, so am in no position to judge, but I have my own opinion as to whether it is better to be born unlucky or be broke. This for the moment was C.'s position. He was frankness itself, and promised, in the letter of our agreement, to pay up all the office debts, repudiating only his private

obligations. I stayed on, but he never seemed to settle, though the books showed eighteen thousand pounds of profits during our year and a half of partnership; so we had to part. The matter was left to arbitration, and in the end I took my original two thousand pounds and went a little further down St. James's Street, where I took an office, and for partner a small and honest man who had long been engaged in the settlement of accounts in the London racing clubs.

I am hardly put on my defence as a layer, but of betting and bookmaking I crave to say a few words, knowing something of both from what may be termed the other side. Had Dr. Johnson seen the horseracing of the twentieth century, he would doubtless have dug the obsequious Boswell in the ribs and drawn his attention to the depravity of producing the finest animal on earth, only that it might be spurred and flogged for sordid gain. He would, in fact, have reviled betting, but he would hardly have ignored it, as the Stewards of the Jockey Club are doing. For a body that adjudicates on racing matters, with a power possessed by no legal tribunal, to shut its eyes in this manner is nothing short of remarkable. Day after day the Stewards hear a babel of voices that yell—

"Six hundred to four on the field!"

"Four to one bar one!"

and so on.

Perfectly well they know of the presence at

every meeting of professional backers and professional layers that attend for the express purpose of pursuing their business. Perfectly well they know, too, unless they are even more remarkable than I give them credit for, that the end of betting and the end of horseracing must be synonymous. For their attitude of aloofness they take great credit, no doubt, but the direct outcome of it are such cases as that of two brothers which recently came before the public. Comment on so painful a case is needless after so short a lapse of time, but if, instead of merely calling on a suspected jockey to explain his riding, they were to institute a careful inquiry into the facts of the horse coming into and leaving the market with so much alteration in form, if in short they had reliable detectives in Tattersall's Ring to report on curious and doubtful cases, half the trouble would be averted.

Perhaps the most deadly influence working for modern sport is that every one who now owns a racehorse is for some reason or other known as a sportsman, and every one wishes to be known as a sportsman because in some unexplained way it gives him the *entrée* into that wonderful and fearful circle known as Society, writ large. Every successful trader buys a racehorse and thanks God that he has not got to ride it, but that he is a "sportsman"! And then we find in the paper that "Mr. Hocheimer was too good a sportsman not to give the public a run for its money, as his horse has been heavily backed for some time past.

Still, he made no secret of the fact that after the disappointing way in which the trial horse ran yesterday, he cannot think that his Cambridgeshire candidate has much chance."

Or sometimes it runs thus:—

"The ever popular colours of Mr. Bernstein were again to the fore in the Egerton Plate."

(M'yes! In either case it is three dozen of '89 Moet & Chandon to Mr. Sportin Riter.)

I do not for a moment say that good sportsmen never rise in this way, because I can think of many exceptions to the rule. I merely venture to deprecate the way in which hundreds of men, who would never come prominently before the public or mix with the great in the land unless they owned racehorses, are called "sportsmen."

Short-sighted, psalm-singing noodles will always howl against betting because they say it has ruined so many homes. They have some excuse for this absurd view, because so many bankrupts allege gambling debts when called upon to account for their failure. It does not look well for the evening papers to report buying up coal as the cause of bankruptcy; the modern man much prefers standing up in the witness-box and whimpering with a snuffle that he backed Volodyovski and went for the biggest coup of his life.

"Alas, my poor wife!" the hoary rascal proceeds. "I think of her now!" And he wins the sympathy of the court, and the Earl of Ab-rd-n and the Bishop of H-r-f-r-d send him cheques, and Andrew

C-rng-e offers to pay for the education of his children. No one thinks of the bookmaker, who might have been all but ruined had the favourite won. No one cares about *his* wife and family; no one seems to remember that, whereas he must strain every nerve to pay, so that he may follow his trade, there is no law to enforce payment on the part of his clients. I recollect a tale of the Receiver in Bankruptcy putting the words into a somewhat reluctant witness's mouth, but he got hold of the wrong bird.

"Betting and the Stock Exchange, I presume?" essayed the official.

"Don't bet and never deal in stock," came the quiet reply.

"Then shall we say wine and women?" was the next venture.

"Am a teetotaller and hate women. Any more questions?"

Then the Receiver changed his tune, and approached his task with a more open mind.

By what right bishops and tea-drinkers assert that every one but themselves is either a rogue or an idiot I have never seen satisfactorily explained. How on earth can this thing be stemmed? The working classes have received a free education, and a halfpenny will buy any one of them an evening paper after their day's work, giving at a glance the form of every horse running next day. It is quite easy to tell them that they are fools, or worse, for taking any interest in the matter.

But after all, are the lives of these people so bright, and are so many counter-attractions provided for them? Have tea and religion swept all the misery out of their squalid homes, that the well-fed, comfortably housed philanthropists should hold themselves free to revile the labourer for following the performances of racehorses? There can be no virtue without temptation, and those who have little to do all day and plenty to amuse them in the evenings can take no credit if they keep clear of excessive betting. Very many of them do not.

Let me conclude with just a word on that other form of racing, known for some inscrutable reason as "illegitimate." Why so opprobrious a term should have been fitted to this sport, which is the ancestor of flat racing, I do not know, except perhaps on the principle that legitimate things have fathers as well as illegitimate. Most owners of chasing horses are themselves sportsmen, men whose riding has not been confined to the two-penny tube and underground railway. Yet the waning popularity of steeplechasing with most classes of the public may be accounted for without great difficulty. Regarded purely as a sport, it is of course essentially superior to the other, and no flat race in the world—the Derby thrown in—is a patch as a spectacle on the Grand National at Aintree, with half a dozen thoroughbred flyers galloping down together at a great rasping fence. But the public enthusiasm for spectacles that do not involve a gamble is nowadays limited to those

who watch county or Australian matches at Lord's and the Oval. One class of the public is fonder each year of wintering abroad, thus taking away from steeplechasing valuable support at its appointed season. It must also in fairness be admitted that so many tricks have been played in steeplechasing — here perhaps is an inkling of the true significance of that unpleasant name — that many erstwhile keen supporters have had no option but to give it the go-by. It has, in fact, sadly changed in character since the simpler days when, as the name indicates, men had not brought it down to a matter of heads and ounces, and merely made matches from some spot to a conspicuous church steeple. Yet one thing we owe it, and that is that it must always preclude those monkey-on-the-stick practices and that climb-up-the-neck style of riding which, however effective on the flat, must always be appallingly ugly to watch.

The coups of the old days can no longer be brought off now. Touts, telegrams, and telephones have brought the daily doings of turf candidates immediately before the public. Every year future-event betting grows smaller and smaller and several important handicaps, on which only two or three years since considerable sums were invested weeks before the race, have now drifted into ordinary "Numbers up—make your own market—two to one on the field," common-or-garden sort of races. One great reason for this decline of an early market lies in the fact that the important sporting papers

insisted on prices being returned for any future-event race when there was in reality no market open. They had representatives attending the London Clubs who were paid to return prices against horses engaged in any post-betting race. Sometimes a real commission came along, and they got from all sources ten to one to a thousand pounds. Let us say the name of that horse was Aye, and that might have been the only horse in reality backed that day, but the reporter had to give quotations for Bee, Cie, Dee, &c., so he mentally laid himself 20s. to 1s. each of them, so as not to disappoint his paper. Mind you, he never dare quote the *amounts;* he dare not report £10,000 to £1,000 Aye, 20s. to 1s. Bee, &c. Oh no! that would have given the show away. But the editor wanted quotations to sell his paper and give the public food for reflection, and the result is that men who lay the quoted odds against horses in P.P. races invariably have the worst of it. If there is a genuine commission they lay it, and horses standing at comparatively short prices drift out without a shilling being betted on them.

A hundred years ago men were backing horses for the Derby that had been dead for months. Perhaps the largest coup that was ever brought off was when Rosebery won the Cesarewitch and Cambridgeshire in 1876. A colt by Speculum — Ladylike — he was trained by George Clements and ridden by him in his work and *all his races* until we come to his four-year-old career, and the

two races I have mentioned which he won. As a two-year-old he ran twice unplaced. As a three-year-old he ran last in a field of five, in the Cotswold Cup at Cheltenham; and in the Westmoreland Welter Plate at Liverpool in the autumn he was unplaced. In the spring of the year 1876 there was in the same stable a horse called Prodigal, one of the best handicap horses of the day, and he won the Northamptonshire Stakes (a big race then, with future-event betting attached to it) with eight stone. Now, Rosebery and Prodigal were tried, and the former could beat him at even weights, but of course the world didn't know it. Prodigal kept on running in the big handicaps, nearly top weight always, and always in the van. Rosebery was entered for several, but never ran. It was on the Leger day at Doncaster that the few connected with the horse started the commission, so I have it from one of the oldest habitués of the turf, and the first bet they took was £50,000 to a £1,000, and after that they never stopped; but it must be borne in mind that other people were backing other horses at high figures, otherwise there could have been no market. With all our flaunted wealth to-day — the paper wealth of underwriters and company promoters — there are no such sums betted now to compare with what was invested by the gamblers of fifty or one hundred years ago. Many a time, without the world knowing it, a horse has made a man (never has a man made a horse— he has interested himself oftentimes trying to breed

it and always had to acknowledge it was a fluke). Well, Archer was engaged to ride for the Cesarewitch, and Steele of "Steele & Peach" fame did the bulk of the commission, and they did not stop at the Cesarewitch. They backed him at the same time for the Cambridgeshire, when he incurred a fourteen pound penalty if he won the first race.

He won the Cesarewitch easily, but Archer was claimed by Lord Falmouth, or the Duke of Westminster, for a horse of theirs in the Cambridgeshire. Constable had the mount. The horse that started favourite was Woodland, and I believe that Steele had the commission to do for that horse. My brother had a horse in it called "The Ghost," a shifty beast, but it carried a lot of family plate. Rosebery won by a head. I know that near half a million, at the least, was netted amongst half a dozen men on those two races. One of them went mad and wrote cheques out to every one he knew. Such was the game. It is a curious fact, by the way, that Sir J. Astley's Hopbloom started second favourite in the Cesarewitch and ran nowhere. On the other hand, it started for the Cambridgeshire at forty to one and was beaten only by a short head. The life of a starting-price merchant is sometimes spoken of as if it were all smooth sailing, but this is by no means the case. The odds in his favour are exceedingly small; bad debts are inevitable; the law waives his claims in the most airy fashion, and thieves employ all their ingenuity to trap and rob him. I remember one fellow who squared two lady

clerks in a post-office, not quite a hundred miles from Charing Cross, to date the time of his telegrams a few minutes prior to the race, whereas in reality the man had got the winner before he sent the telegrams off! I found this out, when struck by the length of time these wires took in transit, by sending myself numerous telegrams from the same office. Mine took only ten minutes to go; the other man's had taken forty! Another gentleman had an ingenious plan of writing me and posting his letters so that they should be delivered after office hours. Then — probably by bribing the servants — he got the letter back with the postmark of the day on which it was posted. That might be, let us say, a Tuesday. Well, on Wednesday morning he had the letter with the Tuesday postmark; he wrote out his list of bets, and I then received the letter after two or three winners had come up on the tape. But this gentleman overreached himself, for he on one occasion had a very suspicious £25 on a fifty-to-one chance (which no one else in the world had backed) in a race at Epsom, and his letter, the envelope of which bore the words "Urgent and Immediate," was not delivered in the ordinary course by the postman, but some one rammed it in the letter-box, rang the bell, and ran away. A more subtle rogue, who either is in gaol at this moment or doing little good outside it, swindled us out of thousands by knowing the winner before it came up on the tape, having confederates on every course, and others waiting at the telephones in town.

XIII

ON THE DECAY OF SPORT IN IRELAND

THAT Ireland is, in my opinion at least, the loveliest lost country in the world, is the more regrettable seeing that Nature anchored it out there in the western sea with the obvious intention of making it the first sporting country in Europe. Of course, its big game was gone; its bear and its wolf and its gigantic deer were long since extinct; still, even without these, Ireland ought to have been the Mecca of at any rate all the sportsmen of these islands. Instead of this, it is merely the stand-by of half-pay officers and others with very slender incomes, who make great account of its snipe and other rough shooting merely because they can afford nothing better. I voice these opinions somewhat freely in the hope that I may be out of the country when they appear in print. Ireland has gone from good sport to bad agriculture. Its green grass, the greenest on earth, was meant for the grazing of the wild elk and red deer and mountain goat. In an evil

day, St. Patrick exterminated the snakes, and a bhoy from Ballymoney introduced potatoes, and Ireland has gone to the deuce ever since. Politicians may shirk the issue, grave persons in every walk of life may ignore it, but we may take it for a fact that will need some arguing out of existence, that the suppression of sport means, wherever English is the vernacular, the depression of life and prosperity. "Free fishing!" is the ticket of the impecunious Radical, who has a rod but no river. "The deer for the people!" shouts another. "A classical education free and every man his own master!" chimes in Mr. Andrew Carnegie, blissfully forgetful of the fact that, in that case, every man must also be his own servant. No one desires free fishing more than I do; no one wishes that mankind generally might, were it only possible, enjoy the pleasures of the chase, and be the better for the privilege; but I recognise perfectly, with the sad example of Ireland before me, that the day on which the game and fish of England or Scotland were handed over to the mob, and the rights of private ownership abolished, country life would drift into a listless and a moribund state. If we except the manufacturing towns and shipping ports, what is Scotland, more or less, but one vast game farm, a pleasure retreat for sportsmen with their friends and families? Sport becomes under such conditions a vast and flourishing industry, bringing men and money to the lovely valley of the Dee and other districts that must otherwise

be deserted. If a Radical Government were to turn the population of Aberdeen loose in the forests, moors, and rivers of that valley, with Mauser rifles, cheap guns and salmon-rods, it would not, a year later, be worth a thousandth of its present value. It would, in fact, mean ruin and nothing less. Take, for instance, the village of Aboyne, half-way up the Dee, and imagine the loss that would by this land nationalisation be incurred by the hotel keeper, the tailor, the bootmaker, the chemist who sells cold cream, golf balls, aërated waters, and tobacco!

Not much more than a quarter of a century ago men used to wait a week—nine days a man once told me he waited—for herds of buffalo to pass their way on the American prairies, and now, thanks to free shooting, that animal, with its massive, shaggy head, is seen no more in its old home. This is the result of popularising sport. Men blazed away, riding down the beasts, until their ammunition was exhausted. Seeing that buffalo were easily killed by mounted Indians with their bows and arrows, the latter being buried in the poor brutes' shoulders up to the feathers, small wonder that powder and ball soon worked their extinction, and millions, the last millions, were killed and wasted during the last third of the nineteenth century. This wholesale butchery is not, alas, confined to the masses, for there have been famous "sportsmen" given to shooting cows, calves, young males as well as old, and then posing as

great shikari; yet it is safe to assume that such unsportsmanlike practices would find readier acceptance and imitation in the classes that have not yet had access to the game. Personally, instead of regarding such slaughterers as great sportsmen, I hold them to be the greatest asses in existence, and I fervently hope that the Recording Angel underscores their names in utter disgust.

The Irish are the most delightful, genial people on earth, and their land is worthy of them. Hundreds of charming and suitable streams flow into the loughs along the coast, and up these the salmon and sea-trout will, if in the least degree encouraged, find their yearly way. Purple heather carpets mountain ranges as fit for grouse and deer as any in Scotland. The climate is the softest in these islands, and woodcock and wildfowl alike hold the woods and meres of Ireland to be better than those of frostbitten England. To the sporting eye these Irish scenes look beautiful and alluring, but the promise exceeds the fulfilment. There is water in the rivers, and there is heather on the hills, and nothing more. Even those mighty travellers, the duck and woodcock, are tiring of those inhospitable shores, and is the reason far to seek? The goose that laid the golden eggs is poached and slain, in or out of season, with the woeful result that the last rays of the setting sun that kiss our isles a soft good-night fall upon lakes and mountains amid which the ill-clad, hungry peasant gathers in his winter peats amid dearth and devastation.

There are, of course, exceptional cases of places bought or rented by rich men, and by them carefully preserved. Of these mention may be made of Muckross, near Killarney, or Cottesloe, some thirty miles' or more drive out of Galway, the latter place, which I rented for a season many years ago, having salmon and sea-trout (white trout) fishing. Well I remember it too. Late one summer's evening our party arrived dead-beat on Irish cars—my wife and I, three children and three servants, the latter including André, my Italian cook, and the best fellow that ever turned an omelette. The place looked damp and uninviting enough, but we soon shook down, and André managed to cook us an eatable dinner on a third-rate fireplace with a chimney that smoked so alarmingly that he was not the least surprised to find a couple of jackdaws' nests in it next morning. Now, there is a moral in the state in which I found the fishing. I tell the tale, and leave the moral to the reader. This fishing consisted of a lake connected with the sea, which was about a mile distant, by a small river up which the salmon and sea-trout had to come. I soon found that the proprietor—by the way, he was then in the depths of litigation with another party as to the real ownership of the property—had kept a net across the mouth of the stream up to the very day of my arrival, so that not a single fish had been able to pass up. This is not fraud, but merely characteristic of a certain phase of the Irish character. Nevertheless, when

we had got the nests out of the chimneys, and something in the nature of a flood had improved the river, we had anything but a bad time.

The reader may object to some of the criticism passed in this short chapter, opining that with regard to the migratory birds and fishes at any rate the Irish are not to be held responsible for their change of taste in choosing their quarters. I am not so sure of this. Personally, I am an implicit believer in both swallows and salmon returning year after year to their own haunts. In respect of the latter, let me quote a case that must have come within the experience of most salmon fishermen. You see a fish enter a pool on its way up from the sea. Cast over that fish and hook it, and then tell me whether its every manœuvre, its avoidance of backwaters where it would be at your mercy, and its determined steering for all the parts of the pool that favour its escape, do not argue previous acquaintance with that pool. I never yet hooked a fish that could fairly be regarded as in strange waters.

Luckily, the green grass of ould Ireland has of late years brought a measure of prosperity to some districts, and given the bhoys the chance of earning a couple of shillings a day. Golf courses have sprung up in all parts of the country, and some of them are very excellent courses too. Only lately I returned from a tour in north-west Donegal, and as a golf course, as a health resort, as a lovely spot for those with a taste for wild, rugged

scenery, heather-clad mountain, inland sea, and strange caves, Portsalon, at the head of Lough Swilly, would be hard to beat. It is the most natural golf course that ever I played on, and I am not sure that it is far from being the best. My time for making comparisons was, however, short, and in fact I visited only two others, to wit, Rosapenna, some dozen miles from Portsalon, which had an hotel crowded at the time with golfers and their families, and the better known links at Portrush. The latter must, of course, be described as excellent, but then it has been famous for many years now. I heard, however, of good golf courses on all sides, from Belfast to the head of Lough Swilly, and where the best game in the world can be played, there will the tourist of the future spend his holiday and his money. And it is a fortunate thing indeed for the distressful country that such a game has come to the rescue of districts ruined for the sportsman with rod or gun, and that its continuance is dependent on the forbearance of no poacher.

Some things are incomprehensible and unfathomable. Why is not Ireland thriving? Why is she not prosperous? I speak from a sporting point of view. Only a few months ago I spoke to a capital sportsman, who has owned and hunted hounds in England, and was looking out for a country.

"Why not go to Ireland?" I asked.

His reply was, "Because you can't get a friend

to join you; although," he added, "it is the finest hunting country in the world."

And there it is. Ireland remains a beggar, and insists on isolating herself. Is it that the priests persuade the people that the foreign dollar of the visitor is an infectious coin? I don't know—no one seems to know—there it is! If you do hunt in Ireland, you must jump. The gates won't open. Years of squalor and neglect have allowed gates, cottages, halls, and castles to drop into decay. If a man renovates a house in the most modern, beautiful style, locks the door and goes away for ten years, that house will be rotten and untenable on his return; the windows will all be broken—why or how goodness only knows! Moth, mildew, dry rot, rats, mice, dust, and dirt: these cost nothing in Ireland. If you open the windows, birds and bats come in; if you close them, dry rot asserts itself. Ten years will in this way reduce a well-kept palace to a dirty barrack. I was shooting the other day on an estate in Roscommon once owned by the Kingston family, and we lunched in what was once the manor house, now only a hovel. A fine old mantel-piece stood with broken windows and dripping walls to keep it company. What was once a pretty garden was now a long broken framework of an erstwhile hot-house vine. Terraces of weeds, with just a few shrubs and trees to remind one of a culture that had once been there, were planted around. And are the people better off? The old families are

gone, the agitators exist; but capital and industry are driven out. With me there was the master of the Kilkenny hounds. A cheerier, better fellow never lived, and a finer country than his is not to be found in England, but neither the American nor the Englishman goes there. Why? I don't know. I am asking the question; but personally I mean to, if I see my way. And that same Roscommon we were in—no fox-hounds, and great grass fields and fair fences. Why is the country denuded, and why is capital not invited? The Irishmen are clever. Why the divil don't they take the law in their own hands and advertise for fresh blood? They needn't be alarmed about the result, for they can easily blarney any other nation.

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